





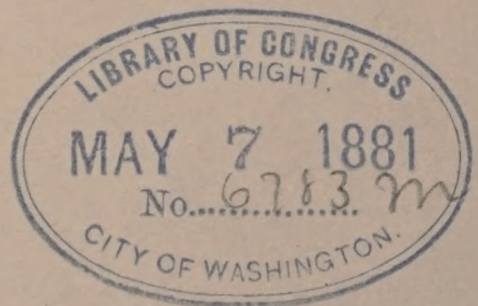


EARNEST LEIGHTON.

BY
A. F. SMITH.

"Semper Eadem."

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EARNEST LEIGHTON.

CHAPTER I.

THE CHOLERA.

The year is 1832, and the season is summer. The events of this narrative have their beginning at this time, in the city of New York. These are the days of the cholera. Its frightful ravages are visible everywhere. People are dying faster than they can be decently buried. Rough wagons are hearses, and uncouth teamsters are undertakers. Men fall on the streets in paroxysms of pain, and in a few hours they are—dead. Little ones at their mothers' breasts scream with sudden agony and die. Tender women writhe in horrible anguish and then—they are buried.

The deepest gloom is over the whole city. Men approach each other cautiously. They speak in whispers, and look anxiously around. A question is asked, and the answer states a death. They steal away with haggard faces. The neighbor they spoke to yesterday is dead—dead. They turn a corner and see a rude box on a jostling cart. That

is his funeral. In every direction vehicles are moving with their sad freight. The sound of the death cart's dull rumbling is always heard. The whole populace is wild with a consuming anxiety. A maddening suspense, nearly as frightful as the terrible epidemic, is burning the life out of almost every one. Oh! these horrible days! Will they never, never end?

This grim malady stalks with frightful strides through the city; it is the King of Terrors. The inhabitants are stricken to the heart in their wild anguish. It breaks the bolts on palace doors; it steals through dark passages, up filthy stairs, into loathsome rooms; and then it kills. Screams and groans are heard from room to room of these immense buildings, filling with increasing dread the panic-stricken people. Many of them leave their homes and wander listlessly about the city, with agonizing fear written upon their faces. An impending doom that they can not avert paralyzes every thought, and they move mechanically from place to place. They are living images of death, suffering in advance the horrible disease that is filling their cemetery with graves.

The time of awful suffering is also the time of heroic deeds. Hundreds are fleeing from the city every day—fleeing from death. Others put on the martyr's robe, and await the martyr's crown. Weak women become strong in this hour of trial. They go to the bedside of agony, and minister there. Self-sacrificing men—Christ-men—forget them-

selves in this extreme moment. Temporary hospitals are opened all over the city, and the sick and dying are crowded into them. The municipal authorities and religious societies leave no effort untried to secure nurses and assistants for these.

In the business part of the city, on a dark, narrow street, is a long building, used for a warehouse. Since the beginning of the epidemic the ground floor had been converted into a hospital, and is now called St. James. This room is very large, wide and long, with low ceiling. A light partition runs through it lengthwise, dividing it into two equal parts. On each side of the partition, and on each side of the apartment, is a row of bunks, making four in all. Each outside row is separated from the center by a narrow aisle. This hospital was opened by the Catholics, and it is now entirely under their control.

Its management is placed in the hands of a priest by the name of Mallory. He is an exceptional human being. He defies all laws of phrenology in any attempt to analyze his character. There he is, corpulent, round-bodied, and round-faced, with the smallest and sharpest black eyes, that keep up a perpetual sparkle and snap in the shadows of his fat cheeks. The whole appearance of the man suggests nothing but good living, save only the quenchless fire of those oddly burning eyes. The expression of his face is generally good-natured and jolly, with a cheerful smile lurking in the creases around his mouth. There are times, however, when the

man becomes suddenly transformed, and in such moments the light of those strange eyes seemed to burn over his entire countenance.

The nurses he appointed to St. James Hospital were mainly Sisters, under the direction of an Abbess. A few men were secured in case their services might be required in the management of some difficult patient.

In a very short time the epidemic had filled the hospital to its utmost capacity. Every day large numbers die, and every day new victims are brought in. The Abbess is faithful to provide for as many as she can, and the Sisters are unceasing in their care. They fearlessly brave the disease and patiently nurse the sick.

Father Mallory visits the hospital regularly twice a day. It is now about the middle of July, and the cholera is at its height. The priest drives over early in the morning, and is standing on the steps in earnest conversation with the Abbess. The latter says, excitedly :

“We must have more men to bury the dead. They lie here sometimes for two hours, and that will never do. They should be carried away as soon as dead. Send us help—we must have it.”

“And you shall have it,” replied the priest. “I will send you more men to-day.”

The conversation continued a few moments longer, and then the priest turned to take his departure, and as he did so, he saw near him three men who were carrying a fourth.

As soon as they reached the spot where he had stopped, he said to the party :

“Whom have you there?”

The sick man was a stranger to the group. All the information they could give concerning him was the fact that they had found him, a short time before, in convulsions from a sudden attack of the cholera. He had fallen on the street ; they had picked him up and brought him to the hospital.

At this moment a ragged urchin suddenly stepped up to the party, and tiptoeing, peeped into the face of the sick man, who was now lying in a state of passive unconsciousness. Then, turning to Father Mallory, said :

“I be his acquaintance.”

“And who are you?” exclaimed the priest, as he gazed at the little intruder, whose apparel consisted of a half-worn shirt, patched pants that stopped midway between his feet and knees, and a rough silk hat that afforded abundant ventilation, which he had placed far back on his head.

“Who be *I*, did you ask, Mister?” and the big brown eyes of the boy met the little black ones of the priest with a look of astonishment, as he replied : “*I* be *his* acquaintance.”

The men bore their burden into the hospital, as the priest jocularly put his next question :

“Have *you* any name, my little man?”

“You be right, my patriarch,” rejoined the boy. “I be Mister Jacques — Mister Henri Jacques.” And the boy unstrapped his blacking box, placed

it on the ground, drew himself up to his full height, tipped his hat further back on his head, put his hands in his pockets, and added: "I be without ancestors."

"And the sick man is your acquaintance?"

"He be."

"What is his name?"

"Mister Stanley."

"Where did you know him?"

"We be in the same business house."

The priest smiled as he asked, "What do yo do?"

"I be contractor to black boots and furnish papers."

"And Mr. Stanley?"

"Book-keeper."

"What is your proprietor's name?"

"Mister William Leighton."

"William Leighton," exclaimed the priest, "And this his book-keeper—in St. James Hospital—with the cholera—good."

"Be you speaking to me, my worthy?" asked the boy.

"No, you may go," said Father Mallory, tossing him some small coin, as he turned to his buggy. He suddenly paused a moment in thought, then slowly walked back to the hospital and said to the Abbess: "The man just carried in is a Mr. Stanley, and I have special reasons for wishing that he should be placed as far as possible from the main entrance. Will you see to it?"

"Yes, I'll put him in 97, which is in the far end of the hospital," rejoined the Abbess.

Without another word he stepped into his buggy and drove rapidly away, directing his course to one of the principal streets of the city. He was wholly absorbed by his own reflections, and seemed to be entirely unconscious of his gloomy surroundings. It was yet early in the forenoon when he drew up before a sightly mansion. Leisurely hitching his horse, he quietly walked up the stone steps and rang the door-bell.

"Is Father Manning in?" he asked the servant who answered his ring.

Receiving an affirmative answer, he was ushered into an elegantly furnished library, and was welcomed in person by the other priest.

Robert Manning, the Catholic, the priest, the Jesuit, is a half-brother of William Leighton, the millionaire and zealous Christian. He is no ordinary man. The prominent brow, the pale face, the steel gray eyes, the thin lips that firmly close over the whitest teeth, the self-possessed appearance, all mark him as gifted beyond the usual degree. He is the incarnation of cool intrigue, of fearless execution. He is now an acknowledged leader in his church, and is considered the best authority on all matters of general policy. But his eminent ability does not make him the equal in deep cunning of his brother priest of the sharp black eyes.

As Mallory accepted the proffered seat, Robert Manning asked:

"Have you any news of interest this morning?"

"None," responded the priest, "except there is no abatement in the cholera." And he drummed musingly on the table as if he were trying to approach a most delicate subject.

"Terrible!" exclaimed Father Manning, "this horrible malady is an enemy that I can not fight against. It disarms me."

"Yet this enemy may do you a friendly service," said Mallory, in a quiet, questioning tone, with a growing light in his eyes.

Robert Manning never allowed any one to surprise him, but it was obvious he did not see the drift of his visitor's remark. He slowly turned his gaze upon him as he said:

"It is far more likely to vacate my office than to benefit me."

After a short pause, Father Mallory spoke:

"William Leighton is your half-brother, I believe?"

"Yes, we both have the same mother."

"I have learned he is immensely rich. Is it true?"

"He is one of the richest men in the city."

"How large is his family?"

"He has a wife and two children; a boy and a girl."

"In case of their deaths, who is the next heir?"

"Our Order will be, through me. I do not apprehend any danger of their all dying. Indeed, I've built no hope upon an event so improbable."

Mallory starts to his feet and says, impatiently:

"Remember the cholera. Hundreds are dying

every day. Why should Leighton's palace be proof against the epidemic?"

"I do not think it is," quietly replied Father Manning, "and I have the same opinion of my own home."

"You will not expose yourself, but—

"Neither will my half-brother," interrupted Robert Manning.

"He won't!" exclaimed Father Mallory. "Listen! Stanley, his book-keeper, lies sick at St. James Hospital."

"Well, so do many others; but my half-brother is not a physician," was the rejoinder, and the pale, clean-cut face of Robert Manning gave no evidence of the thoughts that were agitating his soul.

Mallory, seating himself, again tapped the table with his fingers, while his burning eyes stared straight before him. At length he said:

"In case Mr. Leighton's children become orphan's, will not you be their natural guardian?"

"Yes; I am their nearest relative."

"Do you not see a bright possibility for the church?" asked Mallory, rising from his chair and taking up his hat.

"I assure you, my dear Father, that I am not a mad enthusiast," said Manning, with a slight curl of his thin lips.

Mallory gave expression to a short, bitter laugh, then exclaimed impatiently, almost fiercely:

"I am loth to surrender an enterprise that I believe to be so important and so practicable. But I

desist from pressing the matter, as Father Manning is my superior, and the party most interested in the transaction.”

“It is to be deeply regretted that Father Mallory does not occupy my position,” said Robert Manning, in tones of the coldest irony. “His executive ability should not be confined to a field so small as the limitations of his present office impose on him. Indeed, the matter should at once be attended to.”

He arose from his chair, reflected a single moment, then extended his hand to Mallory, and said: “My dear Father, we’re always trying to quarrel, but then we should not, as we are invaluable to each other. Suppose you go now and return about this time to-morrow; there may be some important revelations by then.”

A winning smile was on the lips of Father Manning as he spoke, and all the good nature was back in Mallory’s face as he took his departure.

When the door closed on his visitor an entire change came over Robert Manning. He remained for some time with his head bowed on the table, every few moments a shudder shook his strong frame, and at last he arose and walked the room with hasty steps, his hands working nervously behind him; then he threw himself on a divan only to remain a moment, when he sprang to his feet, hastily crossed the the room, seized the bell handle, hesitated, dropped his hands—and finally returned to his position on the divan. This man,

who never showed an emotion in the presence of another, is now torn and tossed by the storm of his own feelings. Evening was rapidly approaching before he became master of himself. He then rang the bell, and, in his usually quiet tones, ordered the servant who answered his summons to have his carriage at the door as quickly as possible.

CHAPTER II.

THE HALF-BROTHER.

Father Manning drove at once to the store of Mr. Leighton, and not finding the proprietor in, hastened on to his residence. He reached the latter place about dusk, and soon found himself in the library in the presence of Mr. Leighton. The half-brothers had but little intercourse with each other in the ordinary duties of life. Indeed, they seldom met. By common consent they moved apart, owing to the great chasm created by their widely different religious views.

In the personal appearance of these two men there is not a single trace of relationship. They are wholly unlike. But each is eminently suited to fill his peculiar station in life. One is an ideal business man, the other an ideal priest. This difference in their pursuits clearly marks the distinguishing traits of their characters.

Mr. Leighton, in his straight forward way, gave expression to his natural surprise when he remarked, "Robert, has anything extraordinary occurred in the city to occasion your unusual visit?"

"Nothing in the least," was the rejoinder. "I have felt terribly depressed all the afternoon, and thought to revive my spirits by driving out. I

found myself near your residence and just called in a few moments."

"The present condition of the city is calculated to make one gloomy," said Mr. Leighton. "Is there any decrease in the number of cholera cases?"

"I think not. I am sure it is not observable."

"It is a terrible calamity, and beyond the power of man to do much to mitigate it. The general anxiety is greatly intensified by the constant fear of some of one's own family or near friends being stricken down." He added, after a slight pause: "It has been two days since I heard from the store, though we are doing no business at present."

"By the way, I remember now," said the Jesuit, "your book-keeper has the cholera. He was taken—"

"What! Stanley has the cholera!" exclaimed Mr. Leighton, suddenly rising to his feet. "When? Where?"

"He was found on the street this morning by some of our men, and they carried him to St. James Hospital, where he is receiving the best care we can give him," replied Father Manning.

"Poor, poor Stanley," murmured Mr. Leighton, as he walked to and fro in the room, "poor fellow. His mother's last help gone if he should die." Then, turning to his half-brother, he asked: "When did you say he was attacked?"

"Early this morning."

"And now it is night, and I have just heard it. I must go to him at once."

As he spoke he rang the bell, and at the same moment Mrs. Leighton entered the room. Her greeting of Robert Manning was suddenly terminated by Mr. Leighton saying · “Wife, Stanley has the cholera ; I must go to see him to-night.”

Her face grew very pale, and without a single word, sank into a chair and gazed at her husband.

“I see no use in your going,” said Father Manning. Your book-keeper has the best medical attendance, and you can be of no assistance whatever, while you endanger your own life.”

His wife now came to him, and putting her arms around his neck, said in a tremulous voice : “My dear husband, do not go, for my sake do not go. Oh ! I am so afraid of that hospital—that awful hospital. Remember me, remember our children, and then do stay away.”

Mr. Leighton fondly took her face in his hands, and, tenderly kissing her, replied : “My little wife, there is no especial danger, and I feel it to be my imperative duty. Please do not beg me to stay away, when I know I ought to go. In all probability Stanley’s poor mother does not know where he is.”

With great difficulty his wife repressed her tears as she rejoined : “My darling, I can not bear to see you go. I have a strange presentiment of evil, and I can not tell you why, but I am all trembling with fear. I have the most painful misgivings. Do not go. Say that you will not.”

Robert Manning had crossed to a bay window on the opposite side of the room, where he was standing with a half smile on his cold, thin lips. When Mrs. Leighton ceased to speak, he abruptly turned with this remark: "I suggest, William, that you delay your visit until I go home and send a note of inquiry to the hospital. If Stanley is still alive and wishes to see you, why the Abbess can communicate the fact to you without any delay. This will enable you, if necessary, to make your visit by 10 o'clock to-night. I think this course will, at least, avoid all unnecessary exposure."

Mrs. Leighton at once urged her husband to consent to this proposition, which he reluctantly did. Robert Manning, without any further delay, took his departure, promising to communicate immediately with the Abbess, in order to ascertain the wishes of Mr. Stanley.

The intervening hours passed slowly away. Mr. Leighton walked the floor restlessly, like a man who had postponed an unpleasant obligation which he should have promptly discharged. His wife was in a nervous suspense, starting violently at every sound. If a door opened in a remote part of the house, her heart would beat painfully as she tried to determine if the footsteps were approaching her room. Ah, well! the future held enough that was dark to make this true man and woman tremble. Unconsciously to them the fatal hours were flying all too fast.

The hands of the tiny clock on the richly carved mantel-piece pointed to a quarter past nine, when a servant entered the room and handed Mr. Leighton a note. Before he could break the seal his wife was by his side, eager to know its contents. The communication was from the Abbess, and ran as follows :

DEAR SIR.—I do not think Mr. Stanley can live through the night. He has begged piteously for you. It is contrary to our regulations to admit visitors, but for his sake we will make an exception in your favor. If you desire to converse with him you would better come at once.

CATHARINA.

St. James Hospital, July 25th, 1832.

As she read these lines there came into Mrs. Leighton's eyes a pained, hopeless look. Her heart almost stood still as she contemplated the terrible anxiety of the next twelve hours. But she was a brave woman, and she was the first to speak. "Go, my husband," she said, "it is your duty, go." And she herself gave the order for the servant to bring Mr. Leighton's carriage to the door. The supposed message from the dying man had transformed this woman, and without one word of discouragement, she sent her husband forth to breathe the poisoned air of the hospital. She watched him from the doorway till he was lost in the shadows of night, and then she sought the nursery, and in broken voice, prayed for him over the sleeping forms of her two children.

While his wife was waiting with anxious heart, Mr. Leighton was fulfilling his mission. He drove directly to St. James Hospital, and was at once led

into a private office. The only occupant of this office was a stately woman, from whose dress and appearance Mr. Leighton correctly judged to be the Abbess. He gave his name and stated the object of his visit.

“In the last hour there has been a most favorable change for the better in the case of Mr. Stanley,” said the Abbess. She quietly stepped to a door that opened into the main room, and added: “As you wish to see him, take the left aisle, and at the far end, on the right side, in No. 97, you will find him.”

“Thank you,” said Mr. Leighton, and he passed into the hospital that was crowded with the sick and dying. The first thing that met his gaze was a victim of the cholera, who was hastily being wrapped in a coarse blanket to be deposited in a rude box that was placed so as to obstruct his passage. While he paused for the way to be cleared, he observed the sad spectacle occasioned by this fearful scourge. He saw on his right a strong man writhing in such awful agony that it required two others to hold him on his bed, while on his left was a little boy, a mere child, moaning out his life. A Sister of Charity was kneeling by the bedside, repeating a litany for the sick. He hears her as she says: “Holy Mother of God, pray for him.” “All ye holy Saints of God, make intercession for him.” Then her voice was lost in the cries and groans that are wrung from the lips of the sufferers.

The passage was clear again, and Mr. Leighton moved on. A chilly sensation was creeping over him that grows to an icy coldness. A shudder passed through his frame, and for a moment he staggered. Large drops of perspiration stood on his brow, but hand and face are cold—his very heart seemed to be growing cold. With a mighty effort he controlled himself, mastered this feeling and pushed on. He passed a priest absolving a dying man, crowded by another rough box that will soon be borne out and into the cemetery—a few steps farther on in the midst of human woe, and he reached No. 97.

There was an old, clumsy stool by the bedside, on which Mr. Leighton seated himself, so that his face would be slightly shaded. On the couch lay Stanley, pale, haggard, exhausted, but apparently almost free from pain. When he saw Mr. Leighton, he raised himself on his elbow with an exclamation of surprise.

“Well, my poor fellow, you have been very sick, but I hope you are better now,” said Mr. Leighton, in a kindly tone.

Without paying the least attention to this remark, Stanley burst out with: “Why are you here? Don’t stay, oh! don’t. Go away at once—at once.” In his excitement he assumed a sitting posture, but his strength failed him, and he fell back helpless on the bed.

Mr. Leighton sprang to his relief, but was checked by a hand laid on his arm. He turned and met

the gaze of Father Mallory. The priest quietly drew him a little distance from the sick man, and said: "My dear sir, you see your presence greatly excites Mr. Stanley. He is very weak, and this nervous agitation might prove fatal to him. If he continues to improve, you can conveniently move him by morning. Suppose you end the matter by telling him you will send a carriage for him early to-morrow."

Mr. Leighton looked at the priest in blank astonishment, but only said: "Stanley has been pleading to see me all day."

"Oh, yes; I know that," responded the priest. "He called for you constantly when beside himself with pain, and when he thought he was sure to die. But it is different now. He is scared about you instead of himself, and I do not think unnecessarily so. This is a dangerous place for a man who is not thoroughly impregnated with disinfectants and somewhat naturalized, so to speak. I should advise you to get away from here as soon as possible. Tell him what I suggested, and then you can talk to him as much as you please to-morrow. What do you say?"

"I consent," said Mr. Leighton, impatiently, as he moved towards the bed.

"Wait a moment," said the priest. "I want to caution Stanley not to get excited."

He talked with him for a minute, in a low voice, then motioned Mr. Leighton to come forward.

The caution was wholly unnecessary as Mr.

Leighton briefly said: "Stanley, I will send for you in the morning and have you brought to my home; till then good-bye;" and with a slight bow to Father Mallory, he walked toward the door of the hospital, full of indignation and suspicion. The priest followed him closely.

The chills are creeping over him again. Cold darts seem to be shot through his frame. The very marrow of his bones is like ice. His step is uncertain as he crosses the threshold. As the light of the lamp falls upon his face, it is deathly pale. His lips are tightly compressed, but they twitch nervously as if mortal agony would burst them apart. But he staggers on. He reaches his carriage, and says to the driver, in a strange, hollow tone: "Home, as fast as you can."

As the carriage moved rapidly away, Father Mallory was standing in the door of the hospital, watching it. A triumphant smile spread over his fat face and lighted up his black eyes, and as he rubbed his hands together, he was heard to mutter: "My first card is a trump;" and then, with a deeper chuckle, he turned away, saying to himself: "My worthy friend, you said good-bye till morning, but it may be good-bye forever."

CHAPTER III.

DEATH.

Mr. Leighton reached his home. The worst fears of his wife were realized. He had the cholera. When the driver opened the carriage door, he found his master suffering excruciating pains. He was in convulsions. His form was drawn up, knotted and cramped. The man was in torture. The excited coachman cried aloud for help. The terror-stricken wife was first to rush out, followed by the servants.

The agony of her husband seemed to calm her. The extremity of his danger called out all her latent strength. She ordered the servants to bear him into the house; she dispatched one for Dr. Logan, the family physician, and another for Mr. Malor, the faithful pastor. Then she applied all the remedies known to her. The attacks of cramping passed off, but they came again. They followed each other with fearful rapidity. Still she worked on. Hopeful when he lay quiet and painless; but a terrible weight crushed on her heart when the rigid anguish cords every muscle of his body.

Dr. Logan came, followed immediately by Mr. Malor. A cloud gathered on the doctor's brow as

he looked at Mr. Leighton ; the cloud darkened as he felt his pulse and pressed the examination. But he acted promptly. He at once began heroic treatment. He also at once sent for a consulting physician.

As the doctor was preparing some medicine at the little table, across the room from the sick man, Mrs. Leighton approached him and asked : “Doctor, is there any hope?” and her voice trembled—her voice was full of tears.

The eyes of the gruff, good-hearted doctor became moist, as he looked at the woman before him, the woman with her heart full of pent-up agony, but he replied : “It is a severe attack, and I have sent for Dr. Renfro, that I may have help and counsel. The case is not yet hopeless.”

She cast at him a wistful look, and turned away with a death-like pallor overspreading her face.

Morning broke, bringing to an end the weary night. Mr. Leighton demanded constant attention. Wife, physician, pastor, all were doing their best for him, but he grew weaker, weaker—so fast. Each paroxysm left him feebler. In the intervals between his crampings he lay listless. This stupor grew upon him. But early in the morning he rallied and asked to see his children. Only for a moment were Earnest and Rena brought into the sick room. Mr. Leighton laid his hand on their heads, tenderly kissed them, uttered some words of endearment, and said to Mr. Malor : “If I should die, I want you to be their guardian—their protector ;”

for a few seconds his lips continued to move, but no words were audible. The children were then taken away from their unconscious father.

The little clock on the mantel-piece spoke again, in silver tones, nine and a quarter. Dr. Renfro, the consulting physician, arrived. Dr. Logan, with him, made a thorough examination of his patient. Then in private a brief consultation followed. The physicians agree that there is no hope—no hope. These words measure the depth of human sadness.

“He can not live till noon,” said Dr. Renfro, “and his wife should be immediately informed of his condition. This painful duty, Dr. Logan, devolves on you.”

“Yes,” was the reply, “but I think Mr. Malor the fittest person to communicate this intelligence. I shall go to him at once.” Dr. Logan walked away with sad face and heavy heart, for he and Mr. Leighton had been bosom friends from their earliest boyhood.

He found the minister in the library, and asked him to break the mournful news to Mrs. Leighton. “I will send her to you right away,” he said, “as every moment is precious.”

Immediately Mrs. Leighton entered the library, and when the poor minister found himself in her presence he could not control his feelings. He broke down entirely in his first effort to speak. Then he told her, in a husky, hesitating voice, “Dr. Logan says—says there is no—no hope—for your”—

* He could go no farther. With a heart-broken moan, she sank into a chair, her large, earnest eyes silently pleading that he would take back the cruel words. The tearless agony of that gaze overcame the tender-hearted minister, and he cried like a child.

“Death, death,” she repeated, as if she were slowly grasping its meaning. Then, with a wild burst of grief, she cried: “He can not, he shall not die—my poor, poor husband.” She bowed her head and wept as only woman can weep when she sees passing away the very strength of her life.

This passionate grief lasted but a few moments, when she partially controlled herself and went again to the bedside of her husband. During the last hour he had been rapidly sinking, and was now lying apparently unconscious. She laid her hand softly on his brow, and he opened his eyes, gazing at her fondly with a smile upon his face, as he said in tones full of tenderness: “Darling, I do not suffer now.” The voice stopped, the slightest tremor passed through his frame, the eyes slowly closed, and the loving wife caught the fading smile upon her lips, as she passionately kissed her dead husband.

The tiny clock toned off eleven, and then it ticked on and on as if it knew nothing of human misery. The household was panic-stricken, and every thing was in the wildest confusion. Servants were running hither and thither, and some of them in terror were leaving the premises, while others group-

ed together and talked tenderly of him who had gone out into the great unseen.

Mrs. Leighton bowed before the storm with a broken heart. Both of her children were crying piteously on her lap, and between their sobs they pleaded in a childlike way to know what mamma weeps so for, and why papa lies so still. And she, poor woman, hugged them convulsively to her breast, and then with a moan of pain rocked to and fro. She held to her lips the bitterest draught of her life; oh, how bitter! Mr. Malor and Dr. Logan tried to console her, but when can human words alleviate human woe? They can not stay the waves of anguish that sweep over her soul; they can only weep with her that weeps.

But the end is not yet. The angel of death bears another message to earth—calls another pilgrim home. The family circle that has been so happy through the years that are gone, has upon it now the seal of doom. One link has already been broken, the strongest in the chain; another is ready to be severed, the golden one.

The sun had scarcely reached the meridian on that July day, when Mrs. Leighton was seized with the cholera. The attack was doubly violent, owing, doubtless, to her nervous prostration. Shall we pass in silence over her suffering and agony? She felt from the beginning that her case was hopeless, and her mother-love was shown by her deep solicitude for her children.

In a moment when she was resting easy, she

took the minister's hand, and said: "I give you Earnest and Rena as the dearest treasures of my heart; make them members of your own family, love them as your own children, guard them, oh! guard them well, for they are threatened by dangers you know not of;" — a glorious light gathered in her large open eyes, as she continued — "and then a dying mother's blessing will rest upon you, and the great good God, will reward you."

Later in the day she made another effort to speak, but only said: "Beware of Mr. Man—," then her voice broke as she sunk into a state of unconsciousness.

She had possibly remained in this condition for an hour, when she, without a moan or struggle, quietly breathed her last.

It would be difficult to describe the consternation that prevailed after Mrs. Leighton's death. The servants were utterly bewildered and frantic. Only a few of the old friends of the family ventured in, and they were greatly alarmed. Even the faithful doctor and minister, for a moment, lost their presence of mind. But they soon rallied and pressed forward, as rapidly as possible, the arrangements that were necessary to be made in order to discharge the last sad acts of respect to their deceased friends.

Early in the morning word was sent to Robert Manning, stating the critical condition of Mr. Leighton. Immediately after his death a second message was sent to the priest, but being away

from his home neither communication reached him till late in the afternoon.

Dr. Logan and Mr. Malor grew very impatient in waiting for his arrival. Night had already set in, and the preparations for the burial were nearly completed, and still Robert Manning did not come.

At one end of the library was a small reading room, separated from the main apartment by folding doors. Here the physician and minister were seated in earnest conversation about their two friends.

At last the minister said: "Doctor, do you know anything of the intimacy that existed between Mr. Leighton and his half-brother?"

"Almost nothing," was the reply, "though I am sure they were not intimate. Yet they were entirely friendly, so far as known to me."

"You attribute no importance, then, to the broken remark of Mrs. Leighton a short time before her death?" asked Mr. Malor.

"Oh, no: nothing whatever. She was flighty and did not understand what she was saying. We can not wait much longer for that priest," continued the doctor, as he arose and walked toward the window; "I do heartily wish he would come."

Just then the sound of wheels was heard without, and in a few moments Robert Manning made his appearance, accompanied by Father Mallory. His face was a little paler than usual, but his voice had the same quiet tone, as he gave the reasons for his delay.

He had not heard yet of Mrs. Leighton's death, and when this was made known to him something like a tear dimmed his steel grey eye, but dimmed it only for a moment.

After a brief conversation on their sad surroundings, the pressing duties of the hour came up for consideration. Father Manning approved the rapid preparation which had already been made for a hasty burial. He only urged his objection against the wish of Dr. Logan and Mr. Malor, that the two children should accompany them to the cemetery. He deemed such a step imprudent, and proposed that the old house-keeper and himself should remain in charge of them.

Earnest and Rena were crying bitterly all the while, and begging piteously to see their father and mother. With kind words the minister tried to soothe them, but they only wept the more passionately.

The coffins were carried out and placed in the hearse, and as it drove away Rena was moaning in the arms of the old nurse, and Earnest sat on the door-step sobbing as if his little heart would break.

Just then Henri Jacques, who had come to mourn for the man who had befriended him, and who had been unnoticed till now, stepped up to the weeping boy, and said, with tears standing in his great brown eyes, "I be so sorry for you."

Earnest gazed at him an instant between his broken sobs, then he suddenly extended his hand,

and for a moment, the hand of the boy millionaire was held in the firm clasp of the street Arab.

This is one connecting link in their lives. Will others be wrought out in the future?

CHAPTER IV.

THE ARAB AND HIS SISTER.

The night was deepening, but the moon was shining brightly. A few clouds were flying across the heavens, and a dark bank lay far to the southwest. Ever and anon its shaggy summit was illuminated by lightning flashes, and the low murmur of thunder was barely audible. The faintest breeze, with a lost-like wail, was wafted from the distant clouds.

It had been a full hour since the scanty funeral train passed from sight and hearing, and still the two priests stood a short distance in front of the house in earnest conversation. The children remained on the marble steps in charge of the old nurse, who sat listless with her chin resting on the palms of her hands.

At last the conversation seemed to have reached its termination, as Father Mallory turned away and began untying his horse. But he was interrupted by Father Manning, who said :

“Mallory, what do you know about that little Arab yonder, who has made such an unceremonious appearance among us?”

“Know about him !” exclaimed the other. “Why, he is the jolliest boy you ever saw ; he is as cute as a monkey.”

"Has the little scapegrace any name?" asked Robert Manning.

"Name! I should think he has. Upon my honor he is nearly all name. He calls himself *Mr.* Henri Jacques. A foreign gentleman, you will observe, most worthy Father."

Mallory laughed heartily, and his eyes sparkled as they looked at the subject of their conversation, who had seated himself on the neck of the chiseled lion, and was trying to divert the bereaved children by telling them wonderful stories. His whole attitude and expression were comic, although he feigned to be talking in the most serious manner. Earnest and Rena had quit crying, and were staring at him in childish curiosity, while even the nurse lifted her head and looked at him wonderingly.

The shadow of a smile came to the face of Robert Manning, and then suddenly vanished as if ashamed of itself, as he said:

"Give that boy a new name and a new hat, and he has a future."

"I will be responsible for the first if you will for the last," said Mallory.

"Very well, my dear Father, and then what?" replied Manning.

"Then," rejoined the other, "place him in charge of the Roman Catholic Orphan Society, and the outcome will be all right."

"But that institution is not yet established," objected Father Manning.

“Ah, but it soon will be,” *replied Mallory. Till then I will care for him, if I find he is really of the right quality.”

“So be it,” said Father Manning, “and I propose that you take charge of him at once.”

Father Mallory assented by calling the boy to him. He left the company of the other children reluctantly, and came toward the priest with hesitating step. This is the turning point in his life, but the sequel must prove whether the change is for better or worse. As Mallory stepped into his buggy he said:

“Come, my little man, jump in. I know you want to ride to the city.”

“You be right, my governor,” said the boy as he sprang into the vehicle.

“Now, Henri, I want to have a little talk with you, and the first thing I wish to know is, how old are you?” said Mallory as they drove off.

“Twelve,” replied the boy, and then, with a comic look at the priest, he added: “You be curious for a *man*, my worthy.”

Father Mallory paid no attention to this remark, but plied him with another question:

“Have you ever gone to school any?”

“Never!” and then, with a contemptuous toss of the head: “Do you think I be *very* rich, my straight coated friend?”

The priest continued: “I want to help you,

* In 1834 a bill passed the Legislature of New York legalizing this institution.

Henri—give you a home—give you money—send you to school—make a man of you. Now, what do you say?”

This took the boy by surprise. He lifted his hat and threw back his head, with one eye shut, and with the other sighted through a hole in the crown of his much abused hat. Finally he recovered himself sufficiently to ask: “Be your wife willin’, my pious acquaintance?”

The priest only laughed as he rejoined: “I’ll take care of that, my little man, if *you* are only ‘willin.’ ”

“Smash my old hat, stranger, be you really in earnest, now?”

“Most assuredly I am,” said Mallory.

The whole demeanor of the boy suddenly changed, as he said in the bitterest tones:

“I don’t care a mutton-chop about myself, but—my poor little sister. I tell you, Mister, if you would only take her and give her schoolin, and make a lady out’n her, I’d—I’d—Oh, blow me, I’d do any thing!” And the little Arab wiped his eyes with his ragged coat sleeve.

“Your sister! You have a sister?” exclaimed Mallory. “Why, where is she?”

“She be where I live, Mister,” said the boy.

Mallory drove some distance in silence. His brow was knit in thought as he tried to solve this new feature of the case. “She might be made useful,” he muttered half to himself and half aloud,

“but—but I should rather get along without her if possible. Pshaw!”

Then he said aloud: “Can not your sister stay where she is, and still you come with me?”

The boy straightened up in a moment, and his old, reckless mood returned, as he answered:

“Oh, Mister, don’t now; I be no priest, you know, and couldn’t think of leavin my little sister, seein I’m her only protector.”

The priest gave a short, bitter laugh and a dangerous fire burned in his little, black eyes; but he immediately controlled himself, and, laying his hand on the boy’s shoulder, said, with evident admiration:

“Why, my little man, did you think I was, in earnest? I only intended to try you. Bless your soul, sir, you will be somebody yet; any boy will who acts like you do. I intend to help both you and your little sister, I *do*. Let me see, let me—”

“This be my getting out place,” interrupted the boy. And the priest drew up his horse at the entrance of a narrow, dark street, with old, dilapidated tenement houses on it.

As the boy sprang out of the buggy Mallory said:

“Meet me here to-morrow at 9 o’clock and take me to see your sister, and by that time I shall be ready to do something for you.”

“All right, my pious friend. I’ll be on hand sharp,” he replied; and as the priest drove off he walked up to a shop window, through which the light reflected, and deliberately counted the pen-

nies that he had in his pocket. He then went into the grocery, made a few purchases, came out again, and threaded his way down the dark street. He soon found himself at a long row of four story, dingy tenement houses. When about midway of these he dived into an arched alley which led to the rear of the building; he then ascended a rickety flight of stair steps which were built on the outside of the houses.

At last he reached a door on the fourth floor which opened into a very small room. The door stood slightly ajar, and on the opposite side of the room was a rough table, on which was an old cup full of melted grease, with a lighted wick floating in it. Seated on a stool, with her arms on the table, and her head resting on her arms, was a little girl, of some eight years old, fast asleep.

As Henri pushed open the door he cried out cheerily :

“Hi, little ’un, be you asleep, now?” And almost at the same moment he tossed his package on the table, and caught his sister in his arms.

The child gave a slight scream of fright, but immediately recognizing Henri, she exclaimed : ”

“Oh, brother, I am so hungry !” And she sprang away from him, and began at once to untie the package that contained their meagre supper.

As the boy watched her, he said :

“I be uncommonly late to-night, Marabel.”

“Yes, brother,” she replied as she paused, and lifted her deep blue eyes to his face, “and I was

so tired waiting for you. And then I did get so hungry that—that—I almost cried, brother ; I *did* cry—I couldn't help it. But I am happy now. Take that sandwich." And she extended it towards him with a laughing shake of the head.

On some other page of this narrative the personal appearance of Marabel shall be referred to. She is left on this night listening eagerly to her brother, who is narrating with his usual energy, the events of the day. He dwells with especial enthusiasm on his description of Earnest and Rena. "She be no common 'un, I tell you, my little sister, and he, O my eye ! *he* be very fine, only just a little spooney."

It was very late before Henri could finish all he had to say ; but, nevertheless, he was astir early the next morning. And as he swung his blacking box over his shoulder, and left the room, he said to Marabel.

"I be going now to meet my religious friend, and to see if he's blowed on me."

It was near nine o'clock before the priest reached the appointed place. He found the boy awaiting him, and they both at once repaired to the garret room in which the little Arab made his home.

After a few common place remarks, Father Mallory went directly to the main subject, by saying :

"Well, my little man, I have made arrangements for yourself and sister, and I shall take you away this morning."

The boy put his hat on the table and surveyed it

thoughtfully for a moment, and then asked, "where be you a goin' to take us, Mister?"

"I shall take your sister to the Convent of St. Mary, and you to my own house for the present."

"Whew, now, I be not so certain of that. I stick to Marabel."

"Oh, you need not be troubled about that," said the priest, "you can see her two or three times a month."

The boy with his patched and ill-fitting clothing drew himself up proudly, his eyes flashing and filling with tears, as he said in tremulous tones: "My mother use to make me kneel at her sick bed and say over and over again, that I'd never leave my little sister. And, Mister, I'll never do it. I be her only protector."

Father Mallory looked at the boy in surprise, and something like tenderness was in his voice, as he asked: "How long since your mother died?"

"It be so long ago," replied the Arab, "when I'se littler than Marabel."

After a short pause the priest continued: "Well, come along with me, and you may see your sister whenever you want to."

"It be a bargain, then, my pious long coat. So hustle up, little sister," rejoined the boy, and he placed his hat on his head with the greatest precision.

In a very few minutes they were ready to leave the scantily furnished room, and they followed the priest down the rickety old steps, and entered his

waiting carriage. As he drove off, he noticed a little box, carefully tied with a blue ribbon, in Marabel's lap.

"What is in that box?" he asked.

"It is my mother's Bible," she rejoined, as she hugged the precious gift closer to her heart.

"Let me see it," he said.

She reluctantly conformed to his request, and on opening the box, he saw a richly bound Bible of the most exquisite finish. The following was on the fly leaf, in a delicate feminine hand:

"To Louis and Marabel Langford, this precious token is given with a mother's blessing. Mabel Langford."

A cynical smile came to the lips of Mallory, as he said to the boy: "So your name is Louis Langford, is it?"

"It be, sir, when I am at home; otherwise, Henri Jacques," he replied.

The priest became silent, as the carriage rolled on through the great city.

CHAPTER V.

WHO IS GUARDIAN?

In the future we must call Henri by his home name of Louis Langford. Altogether, it has a better sound, as well as better associations.

Early on the same morning that Father Mallory took possession of Louis and his sister, Mr. Malor drove rapidly to the residence of the late Mr. Leighton. When he reached the house he found everything perfectly quiet, the shutters were closed, and there were no signs of life.

He ascended the steps and rang the bell vigorously, once, twice, thrice before he received any response. He then heard soft steps approaching, and presently the door slightly opened, and the face of a nun appeared in the narrow aperture. It was a round, heavy face, very much like a dumpling, both in expression and shape.

Mr. Malor started back in surprise when he saw this unexpected apparition, but there was no responsive surprise in the peering face. Of course, *it* expected to see some one, as likely the minister as any other person.

The conversation was begun by the visitor asking the question, "Is Mr. Manning in?"

"No, sir," came mechanically from the round face in the door.

"Can you tell me when he will be here?"

"No, sir," again. The nun seemed to be looking at something far away, and from general appearances her thoughts were on the same object.

"Can you tell me where he has gone?" persisted the minister.

"No, sir," with immovable stolidity and unbroken monotony.

The next question broke the formula. "Can I see Earnest and Rena Leighton?"

"They are not here," with motionless precision.

"Not here," exclaimed the minister, with the utmost astonishment: "where are they, then?"

"I don't know, sir," placidly answered this nerveless being.

Mr. Malor gazed at her in blank surprise, with an incredulous expression stealing into his face. But it had no visible effect on her. She quietly stood there, looking right through him at some imaginary object in the distance.

Recovering himself, he plied her with another question: "When did they leave?"

"I don't know, sir," she replied.

There was nothing in these answers to encourage a continuance of the conversation, so the minister abruptly bade her good day, and impatiently walked to his buggy. As he drove away, he glanced back and saw the passive face still describing a circle in the partly open door.

Mr. Malor was uneasy and excited. He felt the need of counsel, so he drove at once to Dr. Logan's office. He found that worthy ensconced in studying gown and slippers, enjoying the luxury of a smoke. Mr. Malor hated smoking, and the fact that his friend was so engaged did not serve to allay his nervous agitation.

He plunged at once into the heart of his subject, telling of his drive to the residence of his late friend, the object of his visit, the manner of his reception, the information he elicited, or rather did not elicit, and the peculiar and *even* temperament of his informant.

This was confounding intelligence to the jovial, but irascible doctor. The columns of smoke soon ceased to float around his head, as he listened to the minister in open-mouthed wonder. And before the narrative was concluded, Dr. Logan was tempestuous. He sprang to his feet, brought his fist down on the table with startling force, as he blurted out: "That treacherous priest is working to rob those children of their property, and he shall never succeed. Do *you* hear, he shall never succeed while Billy Logan is alive."

The fury of the doctor had the effect of calming down the minister, who innocently asked: "But what can *we* do?"

"Do," thundered the doctor. "*Do*, why, make that Catholic scapegrace bring back those children in a hurry."

"Yes, but how?" queried the clergyman.

The doctor eyed him fiercely for an instant, and then he exclaimed: "Wait till I get on my boots and coat, and I'll go with you and show you *how!*"

He bustled around his room for a short time, then announced himself ready, and they drove off together in search of Father Manning.

They went directly to his home, and their summons was promptly answered by a servant. This person replied to their inquiry by saying, his master was not in, did not know where he had gone, could not say when he would be back. Truly obliging was this major domo. He seemed to be exceedingly desirous of communicating something, but unfortunately for the visitors, he had nothing to communicate. He abounded in smiles and bows, and showed himself to be altogether a jovial genius.

Dr. Logan was furious. He thought the fellow was acting the hypocrite, and he strongly intimated it in his blunt way.

But the man was impervious. He was possibly strong in his conscious innocence. He still insisted that he knew nothing of the whereabouts of Father Manning, nor could he form any opinion as to the probable time of his return. The master of the house went and came as he saw fit, without giving the servants the least information concerning his movements. The major domo also expressed his regret that he was unable to assist them, smiled pleasantly as he urged them to call again, as they possibly would be more fortunate.

As there was no other course open to them, they

acted on this suggestion so far as to take their leave.

“A clever rogue that,” said the doctor, as they walked to their buggy. “I don’t believe more than half the rascal says.”

“Unfortunately for us he never said much,” replied the minister. Then he added: “By the way, I give it as my opinion that we had better move cautiously in this business, if we expect to accomplish any thing.”

“He has an office at his church; let us try that at any rate,” responded the doctor. When they reached that point, they were met by a small lad, but he could give them no information concerning the object of their search. The priest had not been there for two days, at least, so said the boy. When asked who conducted mass in the absence of Father Manning, he readily gave the name of another priest.

Just here their efforts for that day terminated. They were both disappointed, but the wrath of the doctor, while as deep as ever, had taken on a much quieter form. He had started out with the intention of showing Mr. Malor *how* to do a certain thing, and he had already learned that he was not competent for the task.

Immediately following this were many other days’ similar experiences. It seemed impossible to get any clue to the priest or children. It was well known that his place was temporarily supplied in his church by a brother priest. But wheth-

er he was still in the city, or had gone away, was a question most difficult to decide.

Affairs remained in this condition, with but little variation, for a period of more than two months. The minister had not relinquished for one moment his determination to find Earnest and Rena. About this time he again sought the house of Father Manning, and to his great surprise found that gentleman at home. He was at once conducted into the library, and as the priest came forward to greet him, he said: "I have the honor of meeting Mr. Malor, I believe."

"You have, sir," was the reply, accompanied with a rather stiff bow, as the clergyman was a little disconcerted by unexpectedly meeting a man whom he had come purposely to see.

"I am glad to meet you, sir; please be seated."

"I reciprocate the pleasure of our meeting, since my experience proves Mr. Manning a most difficult gentleman to find," rejoined Mr. Malor.

"Ah, indeed," was replied, with a pleasant smile, "you have wished to see me some time, then?"

The polite manner in which the question was put, and the real, or well feigned innocence of the speaker, had the effect of irritating the minister. He looked straight at the priest for a moment, then asked in a tone that betrayed too much suspicion to be strictly courteous: "Are you not well aware, sir, that I have wished to see you?"

The steel grey eyes of Father Manning flashed

the look squarely back, as he said curtly: "Possibly it would be as well if Mr. Malor would state the object of his visit."

"I will do that with pleasure, sir. I have come for the children of the late Mr. Leighton.

"For *them*!"

"Yes, sir, for them."

A cold smile came to the lips of Robert Manning, as he replied: "If I would not be presuming too much, I should like to know by what right Mr. Malor makes such a demand."

"I make it, sir," he said impetuously, "by virtue of the dying wish of both their parents. They asked me to be the guardian of their children, they were my friends, and I wish to fulfill their last request."

"They were *my* relations, of my family and blood, and I can not surrender their children into the hands of a stranger," replied the priest in a solemn and impressive manner.

For a second the clergyman felt the weight of this reply, but its force was broken by the suspicion with which he looked upon Robert Manning. So he asked bitterly: "Do you positively refuse to let me have them?"

"I must, as I am responsible to God for my own actions," he said, in a tone of profound sadness.

Again the minister wavered. His better self said that the man before him was sincere in his utterances, but his distrust led him to view it only in the light of an acted part. As he hesitated, the

distrust grew till it found expression in an insinuation intensified by a sneer. He said: "I feared the covetousness of a priest could not withstand the temptation of so large a fortune."

Robert Manning gave an almost imperceptible start, as he turned his gaze full upon his visitor and uttered his scathing reply: "*I* fear that Mr. Malor measures my motives by his own."

"My motives, sir, are above suspicion," said the indignant minister, excitedly.

"Mine are generally, but pray remember that I am in exceptional company," replied the priest, with his old, sarcastic smile.

"I detest your insinuation, sir, for I can establish, by Dr. Logan, the sincerity of my motives and the truthfulness of my statements."

"Undoubtedly you can," is rejoined with provoking politeness.

The minister walked the floor impatiently for a few moments, then suddenly turning on Father Manning, said: "If I can wring those children from your grasp, by the law, I shall not hesitate to do so."

"And you are welcome," replied the priest, "since the law not only recognizes my right, but has already given its official sanction. I have filed my bond, and am the legal administrator of my deceased brother's estate and the guardian of his children. This statement you can verify by making inquiry at the office of the surrogate."

A pained and bewildered expression came into

the face of the clergyman. On every lineament of his countenance was written defeat. He was fatally checkmated at the very moment when he thought he was moving into a vantageous position. He leaned on the table by which the priest was sitting, and gazed at him with a vacant stare, as if trying to determine what to say or do in the present emergency.

The silence was broken by Robert Manning, who said, with the easy self-possession of a man who had triumphed: "You seem agitated, Mr. Malor, take a glass of wine, it will steady your nerves."

His manner of saying this was not entirely free from polite insolence, and it struck sharply on the sensitive ear of the minister. But, controlling his rising anger, he replied in even tones: "Thank you, I never drink wine,"—then, after a short pause—"I had no idea, when I left those children with you on the night of the burial, that you would take advantage of my confidence. But since you have done so, will you now do me the favor to allow me to see them?"

"At present I must decline your request. I may grant it at some future time. I must also protest against the charge of unfair dealing, because I am the guardian of these children according to the laws of our State. Your demand would never be recognized against my simple disclaimer."

The minister was conscious of the truthfulness of this statement, though, in his excited mood, he was not willing to admit its force. He only replied, as

he took his departure: "You have triumphed in this instance, Mr. Manning, but the end is not yet. Look well to the future, for its revelations may be against you;" and with a bow he was gone.

CHAPTER VI.

THE ARAB'S NEW HOME.

Louis and Marabel were silent as they were whirled rapidly along the street. The latter cast furtive glances at the clouded brow of Father Mallory. That worthy was absorbed in his own thoughts. His plans were suddenly frustrated by a boy who insisted on observing the request of his dying mother.

Lifting his head suddenly, he said to the coachman: "Drive to my house." He said this and scowled.

Mallory was the subject of some good impulses. These impulses frequently led him to do some generous deed. But he always acted afterward as if he thought this a weakness, and as if he were heartily ashamed of himself.

Consequently, he always atoned for any noble act he might have done by turning it to some selfish account. This was a compensation to himself. There was a vein of kindness in the motive that prompted him to care for these lonely children. On a second thought, this kindness looked to him like a weakness, so he soothed his spirit by scowling on them.

In return the boy frowned at him, giving scowl

for scowl. The girl shrank back in the carriage with a frightened look in her large eyes. The boy had come in contact with the rough world, but had always shielded his sister. One was brave, the other timid.

The carriage stopped at a mansion that had every external appearance of elegance. It was built on the street, and the small yard was surrounded by a high wall. The priest stepped out and lifted Marabel from her seat. The boy sprang unaided to the ground after his reckless fashion. The priest handed the driver some money, and then they entered the house, the heavy double doors closing after them.

They followed Father Mallory into a large parlor on the right of the hall. It was richly furnished, but the heavy blinds at the windows darkened the room. Coming in out of the bright light of a July day, the children could scarcely see, and they stood in the floor bewildered. Father Mallory gave them but little comfort. He only said :

“Remain here till I return,” and went out.

The bright eyes of Louis watched him closely, but they had a fearless, straight-forward look. Mallory did not have the traits that gains the confidence of childhood. The boy had a vague feeling that he could not implicitly trust himself to his benefactor. He mentally resolved to watch him, and confide in his own good fortune that had brought him safe through many a difficulty. The girl was frightened and pale.

When alone, Louis said to his sister: "Don't be scared, Marabel, I'll take care of you."

It sounded big for so small a boy, but it was an earnest utterance and wholly devoid of brag. True, he did not understand the character of the man with whom he was dealing, nor did he know the power of the church that stood back of the man. Concerning both these points, he had much to learn, but he learned it rapidly and early.

The girl felt the influence of her brother, and she crept closer to him and whispered:

"I could not bear it, if you were away. I am afraid of that man whenever he frowns at me."

"I'll watch him," was the only answer.

Then they were both silent; one was chilled by dread, and the other was oppressed by the strangeness of his surroundings.

While the children are awed into silence and the priest is absent, we will briefly give their past history:

Many years before this there was a handsome young minister settled over a parish in the State of New York. He had recently finished his college course, and had gone earnestly to work in his chosen profession. His means were limited, as he had expended his small patrimony in securing his education.

Hard labor during his college years had greatly impaired his health. He thought that the active exercise among his people would restore him to his usual vigor. In this he was disappointed, for he

had not been with his church a year until his physician urged him to seek a home in a warmer climate. He reluctantly yielded to this advice, when he was convinced that his health imperatively demanded a change.

In a fair Southern city, he found a congregation that wished him to live in their midst, and among this people he resolved to make his home. There was in this church a young woman who possessed the endowment of rare beauty. She was so unfortunate in life as to lose all her family relations. She was alone in the world. Her beauty and gentleness of heart charmed the young minister, and ere long he was a devoted lover. He ardently pressed his suit, and before many months had passed, it was brought to a happy consummation.

They lived together four years in the greatest contentment, then he was stricken down with a slow fever. He left two children, Louis and Marabel, the last a mere infant. His dying request was that his wife should take them and seek his maiden sister, who lived in New York. But by some strange mishap, when she reached the city she failed to find her husband's kinswoman. She did not relinquish the search until her money was exhausted; then she fully realized the terrible calamity that had befallen her. In a large city without money, without friends, without help. But nature had given her a strong, brave spirit, and she at once rented a cheap room, and began the weary and painful struggle to feed herself and children.

Mabel Langford bore up under her misfortunes for about three years, then death came and gave her rest. Louis was a little lad when he stood by his dying mother's bedside. But she impressed this boy with the sacredness of the charge she left in his care. Mere child as he was, he promised her that he would never forsake Marabel. This was done when he scarcely knew the meaning of a promise, and yet he never forgot this obligation. It grew with his growth, and gradually became a part of his very life. And when he said to Marabel: "I be your protector," there was in his mind the memory of a tragedy, the central figure of which was a lonely woman dying.

Mallory returned, accompanied by a woman who greeted the children kindly. She bent her head and left a warm kiss on the lips of Marabel. With an impulse the child could not resist, she sprang into her arms. There was a tear in the woman's eye as she held the slender form close to her. Down in her heart was a deep fountain of mother-love that must be lavished on other children than her own.

Mallory looked on with a dark, impatient face. "Affectionate," he said, with a sneer.

This woman paid no attention to his remark. She was a tall, dignified person, with a fine face, full of expressive tenderness. Somewhere in her life there had been a great sorrow, if one might judge from her sad eyes and sadder mouth. A rumor—only a rumor—said she had met with a

crushing disappointment in her youth, and as a result she had taken the veil. But whatever of sadness and bitterness there might be mingled with the secrets of the past, she presented now to the gaze of every one a fair and noble life.

She was dressed in the plain black of her sisterhood, and wore at her girdle a bunch of keys. There was also a silk cord around her neck to which was attached a black cross. The quiet goodness of this woman won for her the appellation of "Sister." She was never called by any other name. Indeed, she was truly a sister to every one in trouble. It was an example of a life sustained by the high and unselfish resolve to consecrate itself to the service of others.

She took entire charge of Father Mallory's house, or more correctly, the house he occupied. The temper of the priest was always uncertain, and he abused nearly every one with whom he had anything to do, still he never spoke harshly to this quiet woman. There was something about the woman that subdued him, fierce and tempestuous as he was. It is strange that he treated her with so much respect, especially when we consider that he always mistrusted her. She was a devout Catholic, this he never doubted. That she would use all her influence to proselyte any one who might be placed under her control, he did not question for a moment. But he could not use her as a tool, and this offended him. She was the personification of a silent rebuke in his own household, and

this was not agreeable. Still he treated this woman with marked consideration.

"The Sister will take care of you for the present," said Mallory, as he turned and went away. The children looked brighter when he was gone and they were left alone with the Sister. They intuitively trusted her.

The woman sat down and drew Marabel to her. "Tell me your name, my little girl," she said.

"Marabel Langford," was replied, and the child threw her arms across the Sister's lap.

"And you have no father or mother?"

"No, ma'am, they are both dead."

"I shall be a mother to you," she said impulsively, as she took the child on her lap and held her in a warm embrace. It was a hungry heart feeding itself!

Louis Langford looked on approvingly. There was a deal of satisfaction in his bright eyes as he watched Marabel nestling close in the Sister's arms. In his mind was the happy thought: "Marabel has another protector now."

The Sister called Louis to her and talked to them both in her quiet way. She told them simple stories until she had their eager attention. They hung upon every word she uttered with childish pleasure. All her stories had not only a moral but a religious significance. In becoming so truly a woman, she had not forgotten to be a Catholic.

In twenty minutes these children loved this woman—would have done almost any thing for her.

She had won this love by her own devotion. There was tenderness in every act, and she uttered not a single word that had not in it the heart-throb of sincerity. Simple truthfulness and earnestness were the life and grace of every movement.

When they had talked a long while, she said: "I must go now, but first I will show you where you are to stay."

She led the way up stairs to a pleasant room that overlooked the yard, but not the street.

"This is your room," she said to Louis. "I will take you this afternoon and get you a pleasanter suit of clothes. Remember you must always be a good boy."

She was turning away with the girl, when Louis cried out: "Marabel must stay with me."

The Sister looked at him silently for a few moments, then asked in a hurt tone: "Can you not trust your sister with me?"

The boy looked ashamed of himself, but he replied frankly: "Yes, but do not let that straight-coated man come near her. He always frightens Marabel."

The Sister took Marabel to a room joining her own. Then she went about her duties with a quiet song in her heart that had not been there for many a day. She had found something to love and she was happy.

CHAPTER VII.

THE TEACHERS AND PUPILS.

On leaving the parlor, Mallory had gone to his own room. It was large and elegantly furnished. It partook of the character of parlor, library, and office. There were abundant evidences of luxury, and many marks of toil. The priest might love the comforts of life, yet he was not indolent.

A small apartment was cut off the farther end of the room, and was used as a private office. Here is where he held his conferences on deep laid plans and secret schemes. The enterprising nature of the man frequently called this room into requisition.

In the main apartment, between the two front windows, was a large writing desk. It was full of pigeon-holes and ingeniously arranged little drawers, many of which opened with secret springs. Mallory was sitting at this desk, and he took from it a small book and made in it a few notes. These notes were names and dates.

Then the priest sank back in his chair and began to think. His brow knit until there were deep furrows across his forehead, and those small glittering eyes were almost hid. Still by peeping under the long lashes, you might see them lying in ambush, ready to flash forth at a moment's warn-

ing. In such moods as this he always reached conclusions upon which he acted.

Father Mallory had a habit not unusual among men—he would talk to himself when hard pressed with thought.

He muttered: “Have I made a fool of myself in taking these chicken-hearted youngsters? Something must be done with them: they must be made to pay. The church should control children, then it will control men and women. These shall be made slaves to the will of the church. But my policy, my policy!” and he frowned impatiently.

He began walking the floor, still talking to himself. “The boy will be a power, if he can only be controlled. But there is the rub. He is a spirited, independent rascal, and will need curbing all the time. The little fool will never learn, I fear, that some one else may have a better opinion than his own. I am afraid the young villain will give us trouble.”

His heavy face, dark and brooding now, betrayed more of his thoughts. He went into his private room, and taking a decanter from the side board, filled a glass with wine and drained it to the bottom without removing it from his lips. He turned then, and without a word to any one, left the house.

Once in the street, he walked rapidly until he saw a passing carriage which he hailed. The driver stopped, sprang to the ground, and obsequiously threw open the door. The priest stepped in, gave him a number and told him to waste no time.

They soon reached a large building, surrounded by its inevitable brick wall. Mallory told the hackman to wait for him, then went to the main entrance and rang for admittance. The door was cautiously opened, and a monk peered forth. But when he recognized the priest, he at once admitted him.

“I wish to see brother Benedict—I know his cell—will not trouble you,” he said abruptly, and hurried along.

He entered a rude cell with scant furniture, and found a monk sitting at a rough table, reading Liguori. As the monk lifted his face from the book, he presented sharp features, pale in the extreme, but a high commanding brow. In an instant you would have said: “A recluse and student—a man who thoroughly understands books whose printed pages he has scanned, but who has never studied the great book of human nature. And yet on a second look, there was something about the face that would shake you in your opinion. In spite of all you could do, you would find yourself believing that those deep set eyes could look down toward the heart of things.

“Good day, brother Benedict.”

“I welcome you, Father Mallory.”

This was the salutation, as the monk pointed to a stool on the opposite side of the table. Mallory took the seat and bent his sharp eyes on the face before him. It was a little like firing small shot at an iron-clad. The monk did not quail before his gaze.

Presently he said with a half sneer: "Do you not think you have dreamed long enough?"

"The church is my mother, and I am ready to do her bidding," in a solemn voice, and without any change of countenance.

"She has been a very indulgent mother, I fancy."

"But her commands have always been obeyed."

Mallory changed his tone as he leaned over the table.

"Brother Benedict, the church has for you another command. You are a learned man?"

"I have studied."

"The oath of your order requires that you should use your learning and your talent for the church."

"I have kept my oath."

"Listen, then. I have in my house two children—a boy and a girl. They are young, but all they know about religion is heresy. I want them educated for the church—educated to do any thing she may require. I want them brought to that point where they will think only as she thinks, and will do her bidding at any sacrifice. Teach them to ask no questions, destroy their individuality—destroy their consciences—make them machines that may be manipulated by the church. The church ought to be a man's conscience, his thoughts, his individuality, his all. It ought to think for him, feel for him, guide him. I hate all this prattle about free speech. I want this boy to swear the oath of a Jesuit that will bind him soul and body to the church. We want servants and not masters. Do you understand?"

“I do.”

“Will you engage in the work?”

“I will.”

“Do you swear by the holy and blessed virgin to succeed at any cost?”

“I swear,” and he reverently crossed himself.

“If I fail through any negligence of mine, may my soul be forever cursed,” he repeated slowly.

The cadaverous face of the man betrayed no feeling. He sat there impassive, a silent but faithful servant of the church. His will had long since been merged into her will, and his convictions always accorded with her interpreted doctrines.

“When shall I go to your house?” he asked.

“At nine o’clock to-morrow.”

“I shall be there.”

A little later Father Mallory was driving away from the monastery, and brother Benedict was absorbed in the doctrinal intricacies of Liguori.

The Sister occupied a room on the opposite side of the house from the one reserved for the use of Father Mallory. From this room a door opened into a small but neat apartment that was assigned to Marabel. When night came the Sister took the child into this room, and showed her the bed in which she should sleep. She gave her a mother’s assistance and a mother’s good night kiss. She was standing with the light in her hand, waiting for the child to lie down, when to her surprise Marabel first knelt at the bed and repeated a pray-

er that had been taught her by Louis. It was the prayer he had learned from his mother's lips.

The Sister walked from the room in profound astonishment, but with a feeling of gratitude at her heart. The child is naturally of a devotional turn, she thought, and I shall have no trouble in winning her to the true faith. It would be unbearable to have her die a heretic.

The Sister had a pure and tender heart, a noble and unselfish nature, but in all her life she never had a moment's doubt as to the saving power of the church. To be within its communion was salvation; to be without was everlasting ruin. It was awful to contemplate the consequences arising from such a belief, but while she often shed tears over the sad condition of so many human beings, she never once called in question any position of her church. She was so far an anomaly as to be intensely fanatical in her faith, and intensely good in every purpose of her heart.

She was a model of devotion. Three times every day would she bow before the image of the Virgin, and pour forth her soul in prayer. One morning Marabel arose earlier than usual, and finding the door ajar, she entered the Sister's room without attracting her attention. What she saw and heard made her open her young eyes in wonder.

The blinds were drawn close so as to exclude the light of day. On the opposite side of the room was an image of the Virgin, and on either side of

the image were two lighted candles, and before it the Sister kneeled. Her tall form, with clasped hands and upturned face, looked like a spectre in the light. The child shuddered, but looked on with open-eyed wonder. The Sister was repeating the Litany of the Sacred Heart of Mary.

At the conclusion of the prayer, the tall form arose, making the sign of the cross. When she turned around, she saw Marabel gazing at her with eyes full of silent inquiry.

The Sister greeted the child with a smile as she said: "Come, give me a good morning kiss."

Marabel came to do her bidding, but her eyes were on the burning candles and the image of Mary.

The Sister noticed this, and asked: "You know nothing about this, do you, my love?"

Marabel shook her head, but only said: "Tell me."

"That I will, my darling. You are old enough to learn these things," and she drew the child on her lap.

"Do you ever pray?"

Marabel nodded her head affirmatively.

"To whom do you pray?"

"To my Heavenly Father;" and a look of surprise crept into the child's face.

"Did you ever see him?"

"No, ma'am."

"Does he not seem far away?"

"Yes."

“Well,” she said, pointing to the image, “this is the Mother of God. Her name is Mary. She loves you as her own child, and she has great influence with Jesus. You can get very much nearer her than you can to God. She will hear you and will plead for you with God. Every little girl ought to pray to Mary. Do you not want to pray to her?”

The child shook her head.

The Sister drew Marabel closer to her, as she asked in a persuasive tone: “Will you not pray to her to please me?”

“I do not know how,” objected the child.

“But I will teach you if you will only learn. Say, wont, you, darling?”

The child assented in a bewildered kind of a way, and the Sister had her to kneel before the image, clasping her little hands. Then she repeated the Litany of the Sacred Heart of Mary, and Marabel followed her, word for word, in a soft, low voice.

This was Marabel’s first lesson, but the others came in rapid succession. Three times each day a little form might be seen, with little hands clasped, kneeling before an image, murmuring words that she knew nothing about. She was slowly learning the alphabet of the Roman hierarchy. The Sister was well pleased with the advancement of her pupil, and gave her many approving smiles; but no measure of success could make her relax for one moment her sleepless vigilance.

Brother Benedict was punctual in filling his engagement with Father Mallory. He was at the priest's house early next morning, and at once entered on his duties.

He had a willing and efficient pupil in Marabel. She learned rapidly, and through the influence of the Sister, she became ardently attached to the church. No pains were spared to deepen this impression. The Sister guided her with the tireless zeal of an enthusiast. She was more than repaid by the rapid advance of her pupil, as well as by her oft expressed gratitude.

But brother Benedict found quite a different character in Louis Langford. In the beginning of his training he had serious trouble to break him of his street phrases. But brother Benedict was an austere teacher, and would brook no failures. And he drilled the boy so severely that he was willing to drop the words for which he had no classic authority.

Louis was studious and quick to learn. On this score the monk had no ground of complaint. In five years from the time that he took charge of Louis' education, brother Benedict could point to him as one possessing the highest scholarly attainments. In this respect he was proud of Louis, who had grown into a quiet, self-possessed, cultured man.

But with all these advantages, still this pupil was a source of grave uneasiness to the monk. The instructions of Father Mallory had been to make him

a Catholic of the Catholics. The sworn oath of the monk bound him to this issue. But as the years went by, he was more and more dissatisfied with his success. There was a growing fear taking possession of him lest he should fail to keep his oath. He had tried almost every means that the ingenuity of man could devise in order to properly impress this wayward youth. He had succeeded in bringing him within the communion of the church, but he had failed to fire his soul with a fanatical zeal. Louis was far short of a religious zealot.

In the early years of his training, the monk had tried the effect of severe punishment as an argument in favor of the infallible church. But the endurance and courage of this youth indicated to him his mistake, and he quietly dropped a policy that was likely to prove ruinous.

He had said to himself: "I'll study the young gentleman," and he began his work with all the subtle cunning that belongs to his order. He brought to bear on this question all the resources of his learning and his good judgment of the human heart. He had made a blunder, and he was fairly in earnest to understand the causes of failure and to correct all mistakes.

He saw in the young man a nature sufficiently religious, but startlingly skeptical as regards the old methods of thought. Take him out in the forest, along the great rivers and lakes, among the mountains, and his whole soul was enraptured and his heart full of worship. Clear, calm nights he

would sit at his window and drink in the silent beauty of the starry heavens. It was such times as these that he would grow eloquent over the marvelous wisdom manifest in all created things. The keen priest saw this and thought about it.

He had another strong point—or as the monk would have called it a weak point—he loved heroic men and heroic actions. In every spare moment he was reading history, and he never wearied in speaking of noble and unselfish characters. These had a charm for him that he made no effort to hide. The monk noted this and determined to profit by the knowledge.

Brother Benedict began his new policy by yielding many things for which he had doggedly contended. Louis had always manifested a strong aversion to the confessional. The monk had stormed about this heresy, as he called it, but now he was more quiet, and Louis never went to confession only when persuaded by his teacher. It was soon evident to the watchful monk that persuasion was more potent than force. Almost unconsciously Louis was going to confession more frequently than he had at any previous time.

When alone the monk would rub his hands together and give expression to a little natural feeling: “Ha, ha! the spider is spinning his web, slowly, fatally—only wait,” and he had a quiet chuckle all to himself.

The monk selected the brightest characters that had ever ornamented the history of the church, and

kept them continually before the mind of this young man. He fixed his imagination by a brilliant array of illustrious men. The Catholic Church has always been renowned for enforcing her doctrines by throwing around them the fascination inherent in the great works of art. The monk observed that Louis Langford had a poetical temperament, and he brought before him the whole artistic wealth of the church that he might charm his ardent mind. All these were not unavailing, for they were slowly and surely moulding the thoughts of Louis Langford.

The full results of this policy will be unfolded in the progress of our narrative. Here it is necessary to mention only an incident that happened several years after the children began to live with Father Mallory. By the rules that governed the household, Louis and Marabel were allowed to see each other twice a day, but never alone. A third person was always present, who, in a quiet way, managed to hear about all that was said. This system of espionage was one of the things that was peculiarly distasteful to Louis Langford.

One day these two young people were together, and as usual, they were in charge of a nun. A sudden commotion in the street attracted the nun's attention to the window; Louis, seizing the opportunity, detained Marabel, whose curiosity was also excited.

He said, hurriedly and in a low tone: "What has become of our Bible?"

"I have it," in surprise.

"Will you lend it to me?"

"Certainly, but what do you want with it?"

"Read it."

"But the Sister says it is wrong and sinful."

"Oh, it is for a pious purpose ; I'm in an argument with brother Benedict. Be sure to let no one see you give it to me. Keep it about you till a favorable opportunity is offered. I must have it certain."

"Yes, but do you—"

A sudden sign from Louis stopped her as the nun turned from the window. The expression on Louis' face was entirely innocent, but Marabel was not so successful as an actor. The woman was satisfied that something was wrong, but she wisely determined to be silent for the present and watch. She saw nothing else that evening to strengthen her suspicion, but in order to be doubly safe she mentioned the circumstance to the Sister.

The next morning Marabel was cross-questioned by the Sister. She kept her secret well, but we fear she was less frank than was her custom with this motherly woman. At all events, Marabel suffered some pangs of conscience and did penance for secret sins.

About six months after this brother Benedict dropped into Louis' room one day unannounced. Louis was taken by surprise. He suddenly closed a book and made a movement as if he would hide it. But he changed his mind and laid it on the table in full view of the monk.

This book was the Bible.

There was a momentary gleam in the monk's eye and something like satisfaction in his face. Had he spoken what was in his heart, he would have said: "I suspected this, my fine young fellow, but did not think to catch you so easy. But I knew you possessed the weapon by the work you were doing."

But he said nothing like this, but suddenly corrected the mistake of allowing any expression in his face.

He quietly took up a Latin work from the table, and said in his measured tones: "It occurs to me that I should like to change your lesson for to-morrow."

He examined the book for a moment, and then laid two of his fingers on as many pages, and said: "You may prepare these."

"Good day!" and with a bow and smile, he was gone.

"He said nothing about the Bible!" ejaculated Louis as the door closed.

"'Tis strange, 'tis passing strange."

And the young man put his feet on the table, whistled a low tune and—thought.

Brother Benedict went straight to Father Malory's room and tapped on the door. The priest unlocked and opened it.

"Ho, my good brother Benedict!"

"You thought I had left the house?" interrogatively.

“You did.”

“But I came again.”

“What is wrong?”

“Our cub is growing troublesome.”

“Why, I thought you had tamed him. You have been feeding him on very select diet, I know.”

The monk laughed. “I thought I had him in fine training; I had even gained his consent to be a priest. I have persuaded him to go often to confession—a hard task—he has accepted a patron saint, and altogether I was very much encouraged. But—”

“But what?” asked Mallory, excitedly.

“He has a Bible.”

The brow of Mallory darkened. “By jove, the devil is in that fellow. He is everlastingly switching off the track, and as sure as death he will get us into trouble one of these days. But we must manage the young scapegrace some way. That Bible will be the ruin of him if he keeps it.”

These two sat down with their heads close together and spoke in low tones. They arose presently well pleased and smiling.

Father Mallory ordered his buggy, and when it was brought out, he left brother Benedict in his room, and went to the apartment of Louis Langford.

The priest said, as he entered the room: “Ho, Master Louis, hard at your books are you? All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy. Suppose you take a ride with me; the open air will do you good.”

"With pleasure, Father Mallory."

"Then hurry up for Veto is pawing to be off on a run through the city."

"I am ready, sir," and he put on his hat.

The keen eye of Mallory saw a Bible on the table as they went out.

When they had reached the hall below, Louis suddenly said: "A moment, Father Mallory, I have forgotten my gloves."

Before the priest could reply, he had turned and was going up stairs two steps at a time.

"Hang him," muttered Mallory.

But it was not two minutes till Louis appeared again, drawing on his gloves.

"All ready," he said.

Mallory eyed him closely, but the young man appeared wholly indifferent to the scrutiny. There came hissing between the priest's teeth a single word so low as to be scarcely audible, "hypocrite." There was nothing in Louis' face to indicate that he took the compliment to himself.

They had a long and pleasant drive, nothing worthy of note happening. When they returned Louis and Mallory each went to his own room. The latter found brother Benedict awaiting him.

"Well, my brother, have you euchered the cub?"

"No!" said the other. "the cub held both bowers and the ace of trumps."

"By jove, a hard hand to beat."

"I did not beat it, Father Mallory."

"Humph!" after a pause.

“When I left the room *it* was on the table.”

“When I went to the room *it* was not there. I say gloves, Father Mallory,” and the brother smiled after a melancholy fashion.

“Well, we are beaten this time, but let me think,” said Mallory.

He sat down by the table with his shaggy brows knit, and his small eyes looking like two points of fire. Presently he brought his clenched hand down on the table with a deal of vehemence.

“Good! tell me,” said the monk.

“You go home now and come back late this evening, take the drug store in your line and bring me some—”

“Splendid! that will trap the young fox.”

That night, when about to retire, Louis took his Bible from his pocket and reflected:

“A priest is always a schemer; I am studying to be a priest, therefore I must study to be a schemer. I shall not always admit this but I am having a confidential chat with myself now. I am sure I saved my Bible by taking it with me, and I am equally sure that Mallory will not relinquish his efforts to get it in his possession. I must show my adaptability to the profession chosen for me by outwitting a priest.”

He took the Bible and placed it under his pillow. Then he retired, and with his strong and vigorous nature it was not long till he was asleep. He slept unusually sound that night, and the sun was shining through the windows when he awoke the next

morning. There was a strange, heavy feeling about his head, and it was sometime before he could collect his thoughts. The situation flashed on his mind in a moment, and he quickly felt for his Bible.

The Bible was gone.

He rubbed his head violently, and muttered: "I am sure I put it here." Then he examined more closely, but he found no Bible.

He sat up in bed and thought the whole matter over. Presently he smiled, as he said:

"I have it—chloroform!"

CHAPTER VIII.

A LESSON IN ETHICS.

The monk paid his usual daily visit to Louis, in order to instruct him in language, philosophy and theology. But no word was spoken concerning the Bible. The monk wondered what Louis thought about it, and smiled pleasantly to himself. Louis was equally curious to know the monk's opinion, for he was satisfied that brother Benedict's fingers had had something to do with the questionable affair. But they were both silent on the subject, both acted as if nothing at all had happened between them. Louis had learned one important lesson from his instructors—he had learned how to wait.

During these years Louis had reached man's estate. But his residence with Father Mallory had been virtual imprisonment. He never left the house except in company with the priest or the monk. The life and customs of the outside world were alike strange to him. He could not speak to his sister without being in the range of watchful eyes and listening ears. There was nothing in his experience that was common to the experiences of other young men. To sit down and have a free conversation with some one he knew, would have

been a strange episode in his life. It would have been like the running brook to the thirsty hart.

Louis Langford was of an active temperament, and he began to weary of this confinement and this espionage. The constant friction was slowly wearing away his patience. He began to cast about him for some means of escape. He had an indefinite consciousness that his liberty depended on his entering the priesthood, unless he made a stealthy escape. The latter alternative was dangerous and difficult, and not yet suited to his taste. A rougher experience might change him in this respect. There were some things about the former consideration that were repugnant to his feelings, but it promised an active life that might become noble in the service of others. A thought of activity had its natural fascination for him.

Brother Benedict noticed this growing restlessness, and it made him fearful for the future. He felt no certainty about the issue in the struggle with this independent personality. It is unfortunate for monk and priest, when they come in contact with one who thinks, and who insists on acting as he thinks.

The uneasiness of brother Benedict hurried him on to bring matters to a consummation. It was several weeks after the affair of the Bible—indeed it had been so long that the monk had quit thinking about it—when he called on Louis for the avowed purpose of having a long conversation.

This was on the evening of a day that had been

more than usually annoying to Louis. He had been chafing like a chained prisoner under his restraint. In this nervous mood, impelled by a certain restless longing to be free, he was in danger of accepting propositions that would not accord with his real sentiments.

The monk began cautiously: "In the last few weeks I have been studying the statistics of our church. Its moral condition is not all that we could wish it to be. In this respect we need a sweeping reformation. It would improve the tone of our holy church, as well as serve recruiting purposes. I have given this subject anxious thought, and have come to the conclusion that the most efficient remedy is to be found in some eloquent speaker, who may hold a series of meetings in many of our churches. We require one who is impressed with the ethical and not the doctrinal phase of our blessed religion. I have been casting about for the right man for such a mission, but so far I have found no one who is suitable that is not otherwise engaged. Now I am certain of one thing, and Father Manning sanctions my view, that no person could fill the position more acceptably than you, if you were only a priest. You have made oratory a special study, and you would be an ornament to the pulpit of which the church would be proud. Few young men meet with such an opportunity to occupy a position at once popular and useful. I wish you could gain your consent to become a priest and to engage in this work. It would reflect credit on

yourself, and it would be of service to the church.”

A very deep silence followed these remarks. Louis had listened with deepening interest, and the watchful monk knew he had received a favorable hearing. This was the source of some surprise to him, as he had expected to contest stubbornly every point which he should gain. But to Louis there was inspiration in the thought of addressing large assemblies on great moral truths. His communion would assure him a good hearing. Even to entertain the suggestions of the monk caused a quickened pulse and a flush of enthusiasm. Here was the promise of freedom, and also a position tendered that would at once make him the central figure in the whirl of an active life. His face did not show all that he felt, but the monk saw enough to give him hope.

“What do you say?” he asked.

Louis replied with commendable modesty: “I am too inexperienced to carry forward such a work.”

“You will soon gain experience,” he rejoined. “The work is in harmony with your tastes and accomplishments. Under these circumstances one rarely ever fails. The only hindrance is that you lack the priestly qualifications, but you can soon remedy this if you only will.”

“You spoke of an oath; what is the character of the oath to which I must subscribe?”

“I have it here, and I shall read it to you.” The monk took from his pocket a printed copy of the oath, and read as follows:

“I, A. B., now in the presence of Almighty God, the blessed Virgin Mary, the blessed Michael the archangel, the blessed St. John the Baptist, the holy apostles St. Peter and St. Paul, and all the saints and sacred host of heaven, and to you my ghostly father, do declare from my heart, without mental reservation, that his holiness, Pope —, is Christ’s vicar-general, and is the true and only head of the Catholic or universal church throughout the earth; and that by virtue of the keys of binding and loosing, given to his holiness by my Savior Jesus Christ, he has power to depose heretical kings, princes, states, commonwealths and governments, all being illegal without his sacred confirmation, and that they may safely be destroyed; therefore, to the utmost of my power, I shall and will defend this doctrine, and his holiness’ rights and customs, against all usurpers of the heretical authority whatsoever; especially against the now pretended authority and Church of England, and all adherents, in regard that they and she be usurpal and heretical, opposing the sacred mother Church of Rome. I do renounce and disown any allegiance as due to any heretical king, prince or state named Protestant, or obedience to any of their inferior magistrates or officers. I do further declare, that the doctrine of the Church of England, the Calvinists, Huguenots, and others of the name Protestants, to be damnable, and they themselves are damned, and to be damned, that will not forsake the same. I do further declare, that I will help,

assist, and advise all or any of his holiness' agents in any place wherever I shall be in England, Scotland and Ireland, or in any other territory or kingdom I shall come to, and do my best to extirpate the heretical Protestants' doctrine, and to destroy all their pretended powers, regal or otherwise. I do further promise and declare, that notwithstanding I am dispensed with, to assume any religion heretical, for propagating the mother Church's interest, to keep secret and private all her agents' counsels, from time to time, as they intrust me, and not to divulge, directly or indirectly, by word, writing or circumstance whatever, but to execute all that shall be proposed, given in charge, or discovered unto me, by you, my ghostly father, or any of this sacred convent. All which, I, A. B., do swear by the blessed Trinity, and the blessed Sacrament, which I am now to receive, to perform, and on my part to keep inviolably; and do call all the heavenly and glorious host of heaven to witness these my real intentions to keep this my oath. In testimony hereof I take this most holy and blessed Sacrament of the Eucharist; and witness the same further with my hand and seal, in the face of this holy convent, this——day of——A. D.," etc.

Louis winced a little as he listened to the reading of the monk, and a few times shrugged his shoulders in mute protest against what he heard.

"Let me glance at the oath a moment," he asked, as he extended his hand.

The monk gave it to him, and he glanced over

it carefully and in silence. After he had studied every word, he asked :

“How am I to take that oath, brother Benedict?”

“Why?” coolly.

“Because I do not believe it.”

“What?” with sharp emphasis.

“I do not believe the Pope has the right to depose heretical kings, princes, states, commonwealths, governments, nor do I believe they are illegal without his confirmation. I do not wish to swear that I will do all in my power to extirpate these governments. I should be disloyal to the great commonwealth of which I am a citizen and of the government which I revere. All my feelings and impulses, my heart’s deepest and best affections are loyal to our great and growing country. I shall always honor and serve my country, and, therefore, I can not take this oath.”

There was manifest annoyance in the face of the monk, but he said, after a slight pause :

“You are a Catholic, I believe?”

“Yes.”

“You believe the Roman Church to be the true apostolic church?”

“Certainly, or I should not be in it.”

“You believe in the authority and dominion of the Pope?”

“In a certain sense—yes.”

“In a spiritual sense?”

“Yes, I think his power rightly spiritual.”

“The highest claims on one’s loyalty are spirit-

ual claims. Their appeal is made directly to the human conscience. No one can resist such an appeal without endangering his soul's everlasting welfare. But the principles that govern the conscience are found in the teaching of the church. Now, if any earthly potentate should attack the church, you are bound by this oath to defend the very source of your religious life. This would be your plain duty whether or not you had taken this oath. Thus far you are bound and no farther."

"But the oath reads different from what you say," urged Louis. "It does not place me on the defensive to which I have no objections, but binds me to enlist in an active campaign against every power that is held to be heretical."

"But you misinterpret its meaning. It is not so explained by any casuists of our church. Father Mallory has taken this oath, and he has been guilty of no disloyal act. Do not adhere so close to its letter, but master its spirit. A man's religious faith ought to be the most sacred of all his possessions. This binds you to defend your principles against the encroachment of any government or power. Spiritually your head is the Pope, and in matters of conscience he has authority and control. Here he has the right to take precedence of all other sovereigns. But it does not interfere with your allegiance to the authorities of our government."

"The explanation is all right, but the oath is all wrong," said Louis, laughing.

“If you take it in the sense I have explained, that sense alone will be binding on your conscience. This statement is in harmony with the teaching of our wisest and best expounders. You should not hesitate a moment for the reasons you assign.”

“I must have time to think of this matter,” said Louis; “give me a few days.”

Soon after the monk rose to take his departure, and when he reached the door, Louis called him back and said: “I have another question in morals to submit for your decision.”

The monk returned to his seat and waited for Louis to speak. He asked:

“Is it right, under any circumstances, to search another man’s room and private drawers, provided you have not a warrant authorizing such a search? In one’s absence, is it right to take property from one’s room, whether or not the property belongs to him?”

The monk was silent for a moment with his eyes on the floor. He might have been examining his own heart to see if the questions applied to himself. But he answered without reserve:

“There are some cases in which it would be right. Gregory IX said: ‘Be it known to all who are under the dominion of heretics, that they are set free from every tie of fidelity and duty to them; all oaths and solemn agreements to the contrary notwithstanding.’ If the person is a heretic, a son of the church is not guilty of sin on account of prevarication and deception.”

“But suppose the party is not a heretic, but one of the true faith?”

The monk winced a little, but replied: “This of course, would make a difference. But a rule is laid down by our casuists which I deem wise and right. It is couched in the following language: ‘An action can not be imputed as sin, unless God gives, before it is committed, the knowledge of the evil which it involves, and the inspiration which excites us to avoid it.’ Now, if you can see no evil in the act and have not the inspiration to avoid it, I think you would be held guiltless.”

“This is the doctrine of our church expounders?” asked Louis.

“It is,” replied brother Benedict.

“I am satisfied and have nothing more to ask.”

The monk left him then, and he sat in deep meditation. He said to himself: “I do not believe it is wrong or dishonorable, I am sure it is not if the monk’s ethics are correct. I am the victim of treachery, and in order to regain what I have lost, I must act treacherously. It is a sad alternative, but I see no way of escape.”

He slowly arose and stood as one who was yet uncertain; then he left his room and took a position in the hall where he was out of sight and still commanded a view of Mallory’s door. He had not long to wait till the priest appeared, passed down the stairs and out at the front door. Louis went immediately into his room, and from a window overlooking the street, observed him drive away.

“Now, for my unpleasant work,” he said, as he began a rapid search of every nook and corner of the room. His keen eyes scanned every shelf and peered into every aperture, and still he was unsuccessful in his search. Mallory had left his desk open, and he pried into every pigeon-hole and visible drawer, but his task remained unfruitful. He sat down by the desk, his head on his hand, and he felt a keen sense of disappointment.

“I feel sufficient disgust for the job to merit success,” he said, bitterly.

After some moments of thought, he began to examine closely the pannel work of the desk. To his eye there were many spaces to which he could see no opening. He tapped the richly carved paneling, and in response there came a hollow sound, giving strength to his suspicion. “Secret drawers!” he exclaimed, “and I shall find your secrets out.”

He went busily to work, and after an hour of unremitting toil, he touched a hidden spring that disclosed a narrow space, containing a single object.

“Ah! here it is,” he said, as he took up his sister’s Bible. “We are even again, my ghostly father.”

He went to his room with a sense of triumph chilled by a sense of humiliation. The casuistry of priests nor the rightful title to property could not reconcile his conscience to such questionable acts. The more he thought about it, the less grew

the triumph, and the deeper became the humiliation.

In the desperation of his position, he said: "It was my mother's Bible, and her dying gift to my sister and myself. I shall never return it to Father Mallory, but shall place it in the hands of my sister, where it rightly belongs." Then he tried to think no more about it.

When brother Benedict returned a few days later, he said to him: "I am willing to take the oath with the interpretation you gave it. But I wish it clearly understood, that I shall take no step that will interfere with my allegiance to my country."

Some ten days after this the oath was administered, and Louis Langford was solemnly ordained to the priesthood. He went home after the ceremony with a sharper pain at his heart than his buoyant nature had ever before experienced.

That night brother Benedict sat in his cell, with a smile of satisfaction on his cadaverous face. He rubbed his hands together, and muttered: "A mental reservation, indeed! an oath is an oath, and it is binding in what it says, and not in what some one explains it to mean. Ah! my troublesome cub, we have you in a ticklish place."

He supported this unusual glee with a cup brim full of wine.

CHAPTER IX.

EARNEST LEIGHTON.

The revelations of many years have been made since the close of our fifth chapter. The minister is no longer in the prime of life, but is rapidly approaching the feebleness of old age. He often saunters into the office of Dr. Logan, and not unfrequently talks about his unfulfilled promise to his long deceased friends. The bitterness of the old disappointment has not wholly worn away. He has never entirely relinquished the hope of eventually finding the two lost children ; but the hope grows weaker as the years go by.

Twelve of them have gone already. The summer of 1844 was just losing itself in the quiet grandeur of the early autumn days. The promises of spring buds were richly fulfilled in glorious clusters of ripened fruit. The peerless days of September had come, when the whole earth was bedecked in royal colors, and the tranquil days were radiant with charming sunlight.

It was that period of the year, too, when the long summer vacation ends, and all the colleges throw open their doors invitingly to the youth of our country. It was the first day of the session

for Transylvania, and in the afternoon of that day. Quite a large number of students had already arrived, and they were busy in procuring boarding or in seeking an audience with some member of the faculty.

It was still early in the afternoon when two young men came out of the president's room, walked leisurely across the ante-room, and paused upon the large stone steps in front of the college. They were members of the senior class, and had reached the city on the previous evening. For two years past they had been room-mates at the boarding house of a Mrs. Stanley, and a warm and intimate friendship existed between them.

They were now gazing across the outskirts of the city at a grassy woodland that lay in inviting beauty only a short distance from them. Gerould Wingrove was the first to speak: "Earnest, shall we not stroll into that delightful wood and while away the hours of this delicious afternoon beneath its shade?"

"A charming suggestion, Gerould, and I am heartily at your service," rejoined Earnest Leighton.

Note well these two men as they move off together, for we may meet with them often in the future. The light haired, fair faced, blue-eyed Gerould, with his warm, genial heart, his laughing lips that could grow unfathomably sad in his melancholy moments; the ardent, tender hearted Earnest, with his high, pale brow under clusters of dark

hair, his large, open grey eye, his resolute mouth that often smiled but rarely laughed, his manly bearing—the one a man for woman to admire, the other for her to adore.

As they walked off arm in arm, Gerould again was the first to speak: “Do you remember, Earnest, your oft repeated promise to tell me some day the events of your early life? I feel in the mood to listen to its revelations this evening.”

For a moment they walked on in silence, and then Earnest replied gravely: “Yes, I promised to tell you all I knew of my past life. See yonder knoll, beneath that shady oak, let us sit there.” Then with his pleasant smile he continued: “I think it a delightful place to give you a few chapters in my autobiography.”

Slowly they sauntered to the place designated, and threw themselves upon the little hillock.

Presently Earnest said: “There is a period in my life of which I can never think without the deepest sadness. Back of that period is a circle of perfect happiness, the center of which was my mother, my darling, angel mother. Her memory had been the source of every good motive in my life. Its noblest impulses and most generous thoughts have been inspired by her words—words spoken long ago. There have been moments in my experience when the prayers I learned at her feet were my only salvation. How often have I fancied that I heard her voice and felt her soft

hand upon my brow! Oh, my precious mother, how have I idolized you!"

He yielded only a moment to the feelings awakened by these recollections, and then continued: "My parents had but two children, myself the older and my little sister Rena, who was two years my junior. My father was very wealthy, at least he was so considered, and I am sure we lived in splendid style. We had a large house, many servants, and everything in abundance. Those were very happy days. But I was only ten years old when the change came. I wish I could pass over this change in silence, and do justice to my story. I shall indeed make it brief. My father and mother were victims of the fearful epidemic of '32, and my sister and myself were left alone in our orphanage. I was wild with my boyish grief. My old nurse took me into the sitting room of my mother after she was dead, and everything was there just as she had left it. I shall never forget how the room looked. There were her low chair and footstool close beside her work table on which she had hastily thrown some lace. There, too, were her thimble and spools of thread and her needle still sticking in the goods on which she had been working. I buried my face in the cushion of the chair—my mother's chair—and moaned out my anguish."

He arose to his feet and paced to and fro for several minutes, then threw himself on the ground and resumed:

“My parents were buried the night of the same day on which they died. The family physician and the minister of the church to which my mother and father belonged were both present, and seemed to take charge of the burial arrangements. Late in the evening two strangers came, of whom I then knew nothing, but afterward, to my sorrow, learned very much. The most intelligent looking was named Robert Manning, and claimed to be my uncle. I had never seen him before as I remembered, and I should not have believed him, if the minister and old nurse had not told me he was my father’s half-brother.

My uncle, as I was afterward forced to call him, refused to allow myself and sister to go to the cemetery with the remains of our parents. He proposed to stay with us and to take care of us.

The minister said, in his kindly tone, as he took his leave, that he would return the next morning, and that Rena and I should go to his own home. But to this day I have never seen him.”

“Have never seen him,” exclaimed Gerould, excitedly, “why did he treat you so?”

“It is altogether possible that he was not to blame, but of the real state of the case I know nothing. It was late at night, after the companion of my uncle had gone away, and had taken with him a strange boy who had suddenly made his appearance in our midst, that a carriage drove up to our door. Two nuns were its occupants. My uncle told the nurse to get herself and us ready immedi-

ately as he wished us to accompany him to the city. The old nurse tried to object, but he silenced her with a positive order to obey his instructions. She led us into the house muttering complaints to herself that she dared not speak to him.

In a very short time we were ready, and my little sister and I went out of our father's house and those black veiled nuns went in. We entered the carriage and drove rapidly away. I was utterly bewildered by my loss, the strange conduct of my uncle, and his almost haughty silence. Rena clung close to me and sobbed softly, and the good, tender-hearted nurse tried hard to console her while the tears were falling from her own eyes.

It seemed to me but a very short time before the carriage drew up in front of a dark, solemn-looking house. My uncle at once alighted, ascended the steps and rang the bell. It was answered by a woman who wore a black garb. He held a moment's conversation with her, then came to us, and without a word, took Rena and carried her to the dark dressed woman. Rena stretched out her hands toward me, and with a loud, wild scream spoke my name, and then the door closed and I heard no more. I sprang from the carriage and rushed up the steps, but was seized by my uncle and forced back into my seat. I cried out passionately to know what it meant, and pleaded in the wailings of childhood for my darling sister. My answer was a handkerchief pressed over my mouth till not a sound escaped."

Earnest again sprang to his feet and walked rapidly to and fro with his brow knit and his lips tightly compressed. Suddenly he faced Gerould, and throwing up his right hand, exclaimed: "Oh! my God, I only ask justice—justice for all the wrongs I have suffered." Then he sank again to a sitting posture, and buried his face in his hands.

For a moment Earnest yielded to the pressure of his sad thoughts, but recovering himself, began again his narrative.

"The carriage moved rapidly on for many squares, but finally drew up before an imposing house with its sides and rear guarded by a high wall. This was destined to be my place of abode for a period of five years. During all that time I never went outside of those gloomy walls.

But I am anticipating the events of my story; let us go back to the dreary night when first I entered those doors. A storm had been gathering through all the evening; and as the night deepened the clouds grew blacker and nearer. The wind would flare up in angry gusts, and then die away with a sad, wailing sound. There suddenly leaped from the clouds a flash of lightning brighter than all the rest, followed by a terrific peal of thunder, and then the rain fell in torrents.

Just at that moment our carriage stopped. I was so cowed by the treatment I had received, that I became terror stricken in the presence of the storm. I can barely remember my uncle's seizing me and almost dragging me from the carriage into the

house. In my utter confusion I did not realize that I was leaving my old nurse. I was painfully certain afterward of watching eagerly through many days for her return. It is scarcely necessary to say she never came. Gradually hope grew sick, and then it died. Miserable indeed is the hour in which hope perishes.

As I slowly recovered from my consternation, I found myself alone with my uncle in a richly furnished library. The first thing that distinctly attracted my attention was his leaning on the mantelpiece and looking at me intently with a strange expression in his eyes. When he saw that I was noticing him, he approached me and said, in those even tones with which I afterward became so familiar: 'My poor boy, you are surely very tired and sleepy, you may go to bed at once;' he rang the bell, which was promptly answered by a servant, to whom he said:

'John, this is my nephew, Earnest Leighton, you will now show him to his room.' The cold chills ran over me as I listened to the unconcerned manner in which this was spoken.

But I had little time for reflection, as John at once, and without a word, took me by the hand and led me away. I may as well say here, that the only comfort I received during my stay in that house, was through little acts of kindness from this servant. He was one of the queer geniuses whom I have ever met. When in the presence of my uncle, he was a perfect pattern of demure pro-

priety ; but when out of his sight there was a certain important air about him, accompanied by many expressions which might indicate a guarded hatred.

We passed out into a large hall, and then ascended a broad flight of stairs, and again on through several other halls until we reached the rear of the building. Presently we stopped before a door, and John, selecting a key from his belt, unlocked it, and, pushing it open, bade me enter. He followed me in silence, lighted a solitary candle that was on the mantel-piece : then he leaned himself against the wall and eyed me in a curious kind of fashion, as I examined the contents of the room. Scant indeed was the furniture—a bed, a small table, two chairs, a tin pitcher and a wash basin of the same material, and a rough towel. Besides these there was a picture of the Virgin Mary and the infant Savior, together with an ivory cross of some size. I was deeply impressed by the difference between this and my own home, and it made me very heavy-hearted.

But my observation and meditation alike were interrupted by John, who said : ‘I’ll tell you what I think, little heretic ; I think you’re a chicken-hearted little goose, a whimpering baby just now, but at bottom you really have some sand in your craw. But before you get any good from that sand, our holy priest will chuck you into a jug and stop you up tighter than a drum.’

I have no doubt that I greeted this wise deliv-

erance with an incredulous stare. John, smiling complacently at my inquiring look, continued: 'Well, you are rather a fine chap, and I'm sorry for you if you are a heretic. I wish I could help you, but I can't; it's no use talking. But I'll give you this advice, if you won't tell on me. You must never cross them in anything they tell you to do.'

Just then a bell rang, and in an instant John had on his *pious* face, and telling me to blow out the candle when I retired, he went away, locking the door after him. And I was left alone."

There was a pause for several moments, then Earnest laid his hand on his companion's shoulder and said: "Gerould, I did but two things through the rest of that long weary night—I bitterly wept, and prayed over and over again the prayers my mother taught me." As he looked at the fair-browed Gerould, with his deep, compassionate eyes, he added: "May it never be the sad fortune of my dear college chum to suffer as I then suffered."

Are there moments in our lives when coming danger "casts its shadow before," while it is still distant and unseen? It is well to let the future in her own good time speak her painful secrets.

"It required," continued Earnest, "many weeks for me to become habituated to my new and strange surroundings. I was left almost entirely alone, save only when my meals were brought to me. The only exercise allowed me was a small yard,

flanked on all sides by the main building and high walls, and to this I had access but once a day, and then without any companion. I suppose I had been in that house some ten days, when one morning my uncle came to me, and in his impassive tones said, that my sister had suddenly taken sick and died. He also told me that she had been most tenderly nursed, and that no curatives were left untried which the best physicians could suggest. And then, without another word, he left me to struggle alone with my terrible grief.

It was possibly two weeks later when an entire change was given to the course of my life. A priest suddenly appeared in my room, his round face beamed in a jovial smile, and there was a certain reckless air in all his movements and in every thing he said. He began the conversation by announcing that he was to become my teacher, that he was Father Mallory, that he would be delighted to instruct me in all the mysteries of religion, as well as in the rich and gifted tongue of the Latins. As there was nothing so important as religion, he thought he would better begin with that.

He called me to him, and taking me by the hand, began talking in the gentlest manner. He asked me about my parents, my little sister—all about my home. Then he spoke so kindly of my mother that he at once won my heart and confidence, even while I almost unconsciously shrank from something unpleasant in his countenance. His questions drew from me all the information I could

give concerning my religious training. At this he only shook his head sadly and muttered half to himself 'that time would remedy all that.' He then proposed to show me some beautiful pictures which he said were in the chapel, and leading me by the hand, we went into that magnificent room. In my father's house we had many paintings, but none to equal these. He brought me to a representation of the Crucifixion, and told me all about it, naming the different characters. There was also a most splendid painting of the Virgin Mary, before which a man was kneeling in the attitude of prayer, with his hands clasped. There was something so quiet and solemn about this chapel that a feeling of reverence stole into my heart, and this was toned down to unspeakable tenderness by the gentle words of my priestly conductor; and as he led me back to my own room, my whole soul was full of strange emotions.

He came to see me every day, and at every visit he gained some new hold on my confidence. He led me so gradually into my studies that before I was aware of it, I had my full complement. I was always fond of books, and he taught me with the greatest patience. Even thus early, after my recitations, he would talk to me a long while on some religious topic. He began by telling me of little incidents that occurred in the life of some saint or martyr, but presently he dwelt altogether on the horrors of purgatory and hell. So terribly vivid were these descriptions that I could almost see the

victims as they writhed in deathless torment. He would enter into the minutest details as to the causes of this punishment, and would always close with the statement that a good Catholic was safe from this danger.

It required but a short time for this kind of conversation to make a deep impression on my susceptible mind. I grew almost wild. And just at this period a little incident happened which was not calculated to allay my anxiety. John brought me my dinner, as was his custom, and as usual he said but little while I was eating. But as he was leaving the room, he paused and looked at me sadly for a moment and said: 'Little heretic, I am sorry for you. Your pious priest will jug you, certain.' He walked away without another word, leaving me wholly bewildered, and at supper time he would give me no explanation. But he said as he was leaving again: 'A boy ought to remember his mother.'

Some time after this, possibly two months, during the period of my greatest excitement, the priest came earlier than usual one morning. He looked as if he were greatly depressed or offended, I could scarcely tell which. But it was not long till the storm burst upon me. He gathered together, in one fearful thunderbolt, all the wrathful words which he had spoken against sinners and heretics, and he hurled them in awful fury at my wicked self. I trembled like a leaf, and mentally prayed to sink forever out of his sight. His scathing words, his burning

anathemas, seemed to pierce my very soul. I was horrified! I could almost feel the flames of purgatory as they bathed my body in their fiery flood. It was appalling, it was awful, the power which that man possessed. His little black eyes would sparkle and flash, and they would throw a strange light all over his face.

In my unbearable agony I screamed to him to know what I should do in order to escape such infinite punishment. He said I must come into the Holy Catholic Church, as safety alone was to be found within her bosom; that I should pray to the Virgin and Saints, confess my sins to the priest that he might absolve me. He also said that I belonged to an old family of heretics, and that it would require deep contrition on my part to escape the consequences of such fearful wickedness. He urged me at once to enter the church with the determination of devoting my life to her services as a priest.

For the time being, Father Mallory was victor. I would have done almost anything to escape from myself. He had conjured up before me a fearful image of punishment and death. My whole brain was wild and unsettled. Horrible fantasies were ever present with me, hovering over me, devouring me. I tried to hide myself in the bosom of the church; I sought to lose myself in the mysteries of my new faith; but it was all of no avail. I plunged deeper than ever into my studies, in the mad hope of finding peace and rest, but I found it not.

Months glided away until they had aggregated into years. They were miserable years to me, wild, mad years. I had surrendered myself entirely to the influence of my priesly instructor. He boasted of the progress I had made, and praised my faithfulness and zeal.

But the time of reaction came—strangely came. It was in early June that I had fallen into one of my miserable moods of fiery doubting. For three nights I had scarcely slept at all, but had walked the floor in consuming restlessness. At last, in utter exhaustion, I threw myself on my bed and slept. And in that sleep, with a vividness almost real, I lived over again the days of my boyhood in my old home.

Out of this dream I suddenly awoke to find the moon pouring her rays full in my face. I started up at once and my thoughts traveled slowly over all the vision I had seen in my slumber. There came into my heart the deepest yearning to live again in the simple faith of my childhood. It grew to be more than a yearning; it swelled in my soul till it became the strongest emotion I have ever experienced. I sprang from my bed, and vowed by all the sacred memories of my old home, that I would escape from that hideous place, and by the help of the God whom I had forsaken, I would yet *be a man*.

I seldom met my uncle, and rarely had an opportunity of talking with him. But when Father Mallory came to my room the next morning, I told him

I wished to see my uncle, that I had something I especially desired to tell him. My request was granted, and my uncle soon made his appearance, but contrary to my wish, Father Mallory remained in the room with us.

I told them without any reserve, that I intended to renounce the Catholic faith, for the simple reason that it was contrary to my deepest convictions. I also besought my uncle for the privilege of going out into the world, and of earning my own livelihood. All I asked was freedom; I requested no aid.

My uncle said, with his cold smile: 'My son, you ask an impossible thing. Remember the irrevocable vows you have taken! I will leave you with Father Mallory, who will instruct you on this special point, for you are in danger of falling into gross heresy.' And as he walked out, he remarked to the priest in a low voice not intended for my ear: 'Use no harsh measures of discipline as long as you can possibly avoid it.'

It is useless to dwell on the stormy conversation that followed. I was inexorable, and the priest was unyielding. He unavailingly exhausted all the power of both persuasion and threats. He finally went away in hot wrath, leaving me the unpleasant assurance that a fearful punishment would be visited upon my obstinacy.

Well, the punishment came. It was first given in several mild forms, but finally culminated in my being chained in an underground cell, with nothing

but a little straw between me and the cold rock floor. My suffering was alleviated by the consciousness that I was right, and the ever-deepening determination not to yield. I sometimes became very low spirited and despondent, and my agony occasionally seemed almost unbearable. I do not know how long I should have held out, if relief had not come in a most unexpected way.

While lying there one day in my wretched, loathsome condition, I heard some persons approaching, then followed the grating of the key and the turning of the bolt, and there stood in my cell Father Mallory and a young priest. Each one of them carried a light, and when they approached near me, I had a full view of the young priest's face, which Father Mallory was closely watching. There was combined in its expression, dauntless courage, heroic fortitude, and cheerful good humor. It belonged to a boy who, when he had reached the maturity of manhood, would go down to death with a smile for the sake of duty, or would become a martyr, without a murmur, in the cause of right. It was a noble, open face, full of tenderness and full of strength. As he gazed at me, a look of compassion was in his large brown eyes, that was a full atonement for the priestly dress that he wore, and which I had learned to hate.

Mallory sneeringly said: 'Behold one end of a refractory priest,' and he looked at me with a hideous leer. Then he added: 'We do this for the good of his soul.'

‘Such treatment would damn my soul, Father Mallory,’ replied the young man. ‘You are aware that I can sympathize with no such brutality.’

‘Silence!’ thundered the priest, ‘you are a chicken-hearted little simpleton, and a few weeks, wholesome discipline would make a man out of you, and teach you how to hold your tongue or use it respectfully. Out of here, and that in a hurry.’

The young priest made no reply to this tirade, but turned his face, beaming with sympathy, full upon me, and said, in a low, earnest voice :

‘I am sorry for you, my suffering fellow-being,’ and then, with a proud, brave step, walked from the cell. The priest followed him, gnashing his teeth in rage, and again I was left alone.

Many days passed after this event before anything occurred worthy of note. The darkness of night had settled upon the world, I supposed, as the gloom in my cell was intensified to deepest blackness. Suddenly there was another sound, save the noise of rats, that attracted my attention. A key had silently turned in the lock, and the ponderous door swung open with a slight grating sound, and then it was closed again. I strained my eyes in vain to see the person who had come in. I bent forward and listened eagerly, but no sound fell upon my ear. Unable to restrain my anxiety, I cried : ‘Who is there?’

Immediately there was a movement toward me, and a voice said—a voice that I shall never forget :

‘Be quiet, I have come to help you.’

I was never so agitated in my life. I could only breathe out, ‘God bless you.’ I trembled so violently that my whole frame was in a quiver.

My deliverer said in a cheerful tone :

‘Keep cool till I strike a light, and I will free you.’

He at once lighted a candle, which revealed to me the features of the young priest who had been to my cell several days before. I had recognized his voice when he had first spoken, and I should know it now.

He held up the candle so that it threw its flickering rays all over the cell, then he said, with a quiet smile :

‘I have some acquaintances who keep better quarters than you, my friend.’

‘For the love of—of heaven, get me away from here,’ I gasped.

‘Oh ! I intend to do that, only calm down a little. I can never run the gauntlet with you, unless you keep as cool as—as, well, say a cucumber,’ he replied, in the same encouraging tone.

Then he suddenly bent down, and taking me by the foot, added :

‘Oh, ho ! So you are fast by this underwalker, are you ? All right, while you screw up your courage to the escaping point, I shall just amuse myself by filing this ring in two.’

He thrust his hand into the pocket of his priestly robe and produced a three-cornered file, with

which he at once set to work, but talking all the while. There was something half comic in his manner, although he was telling me of the escape of several historic characters from prison. But all the time he was speaking so rapidly, I was trying to determine what there was about him that appeared so familiar to me. I gradually reached the conclusion that I had met him before, and under very peculiar circumstances. But where and when? These questions I could not answer till the chain fell from my ankle, and he sprang to his feet and said with a little laugh: 'There, my covey, you be free now.' In a moment the entire surroundings of our former meeting flashed upon me. I knew who he was, though I knew not his name.

He immediately became very serious, and said, in a low, earnest tone:

'Listen! I have voluntarily undertaken to assist you in escaping. The effort is attended with great danger to both of us. To fail is ruin. I want you to keep close to me, move silently, and obey everything I tell you without a word. Will you do it?'

I gave the required promise, but, before starting I asked him to tell me to whom I was indebted for my very life.

'Your life is not yet saved; when it is, there will be time enough for thanks. Now follow me.'

He examined the door carefully, then blew out the candle and said in a whisper: 'Keep close.' I followed him out of that lonely cell, feeling that my limbs could scarcely bear me; but I gained

strength and confidence as I moved along, and a fierce determination took possession of me to escape or die.

We threaded our way slowly along those low, dark archways, searching eagerly for the outlet to the upper part of the building. Suddenly the young priest stopped and said :

‘I believe I have lost my way. These diagonal aisles, intercepting those crossing at right angles, have confused me, though I noted them carefully when I came in.’

We both remained silent for a few moments, when he asked :

‘Do you know anything about the location of the trap door?’

I was forced to give a negative answer, for I had been carried to my dungeon blindfolded.

My companion did not seem the least excited, but was whistling softly, so low, indeed, that I could scarcely hear him. Presently he said :

‘Let us try this way,’ and started off with silent, cautious tread. But after a short time he paused again, and murmured, ‘Lost, certain.’

The words were scarcely uttered, when we heard the chimes of a clock in the hall above us. The young priest seized my arm and whispered, ‘All right, so far ; the clock is by the trap door ; come on.’

We were soon ascending the steps, and cautiously opening the door, passed silently into the lighted hall. My companion made a quick sign for me to

follow him, and moved away rapidly, but pausing every few moments to listen intently. In less than five minutes we were in the open space in rear of the main building. But here we were confronted with a new and unexpected danger. A solitary figure was walking away from us across the narrow yard; we knew he must soon turn in his promenade and approach us. The first impulse was to retrace our steps through the door, but a spring lock had closed that avenue of escape.

I felt that all was lost when all was so near gained, and I really believe I should have given up in despair, if I had been alone. But not so with my guide. He said, 'Quick,' and ran hastily to the opposite side of the enclosure, and then 'Down,' and we both crouched close to the wall in the deepest shadow.

The clouds were too thick for the moon to give much light, yet when the man approached us, I could easily recognize Father Mallory. He continued to walk to and fro what seemed to me an age. Every now and then he would come very near us, and I felt sure we would be discovered, but he was absorbed in thought, and the dark shadow protected us. To our great joy he finally went into the house and closed the door behind him.

Immediately my companion was on his feet, and picking up a small stone tossed it over the high wall. Almost instantly it was answered by a low whistle, followed by a rock falling near us to which was attached a string. Soon we had a rope in our

possession, and in a very few moments afterwards we were standing safe on the street. There was a ragged urchin who had undoubtedly helped us in our escape, and his greeting was: 'Golly, I'se glad you'se out.'

The young priest kindly bade him run away, and taking me by the arm led me some distance to an unobserved place in the shadow of an old rickety building. Then he said in his rich, tender tones: 'Here is a purse of money, you can not get away without it. Your only hope is in leaving the city to-night and observing secrecy and caution wherever you go. Hungry wolves that have tasted blood would not hunt you more fiercely than you will be hunted to-morrow. Even I,' he said bitterly, 'will be forced on your track. I can be of no more service to you, but you must go now, and may God bless you and guide you.'

As he ceased to speak he held out his hand which I grasped, almost overcome by my feelings. 'Tell me, before I go,' I said, 'to whom I owe my freedom and my life.'

'We have met before,' he replied, 'and something tells me that we will meet again. Then it may be that you will know my name; but again farewell, for you must hasten away.'

I watched him as he walked from me, till, turning a corner, he passed from sight, and then I—went, I knew not whither. I wandered out of the city, and when morning came it found me in the open country. I spent that day in a rick of straw which

some thrifty farmer had prepared for his cattle. I pressed forward again at night. But it is useless for me to dwell here, as all the days and nights at this time were very much alike. I occasionally met with an adventure, and frequently suffered from hunger and exposure.

At the end of five weeks, I found myself in Bourbon county, Kentucky, and my little stock of money entirely exhausted. I reached there one evening about dusk, and approached a farm house in the fork of Hinkston and Stoner. It was a most beautiful place, and, in my wearied condition, I felt that I should love to rest there through all my life.

As I drew near the house, I saw a lady and gentleman sitting in the large veranda, and when I came up they both greeted me kindly. My heart was throbbing up in my throat, and I could scarcely speak at all, but I managed at last to tell them that I was poor, without home or friends, and that I wanted some place to work, that I might earn a living.

My reserve melted away at once before the open-hearted frankness and gentleness of the lady, and I presently found myself talking freely to both of them. I was prudent in revealing facts connected with my past life, and only communicated enough to establish me on a good footing with Mr. and Mrs. Rodman.

It is useless to pursue my story any further. From that time till now, their home has been mine. I can only pay to them a tribute of grateful

acknowledgment for their unbounded kindness and generosity. But the first night I spent in their house, I registered again the vow I had made in my dark prisoner's cell, that, by the help of God, I would be a *man*. I have positively refused to accept charity, but by the labor of my own hands I have earned the means that have passed me thus far through college.

I have told you, in my broken way, the story of my life to the present time. It has had in it much that was sad, and also much that was bright and joyous. I have no complaints to utter, though I have some wrongs to right, for I have not yet forgotten my sister."

"But," said Gerould, "they told you she was dead."

"Yes, *they* told me so," replied Earnest, bitterly. "But it is time we were returning ; shall we not go?"

Arm in arm the young men walked back to their boarding house. As they reached the gate, they noticed three ladies standing on the veranda, two of whom they recognized as their hostess and her neighbor, Mrs. Livingston, but the other was a young lady and a stranger. The ladies retained their position until the young gentlemen came up, when Mrs. Stanley introduced them to Miss Langford, of New York, and then added archly, "Miss Marabel has come to spend some months with her friend, Mrs. Livingston."

CHAPTER X.

THE PRIESTS IN COUNCIL.

Again we must conduct our readers to the city of New York, at a period somewhat earlier than that in which the events of the last chapter occurred. A most thorough search immediately followed the escape of Earnest, and was continued with wonderful persistency, but for a long while all efforts in that direction had apparently ceased. Father Mallory at once suspected John as having been instrumental in effecting the prisoner's escape, but the confidence of Robert Manning in his servant was unshaken, and his authority alone saved him from punishment. No suspicion ever fell upon the young priest.

It is necessary here to make a few general statements in order to get the proper connection of our narrative. Very early in the present century a conflict arose between the Catholic Church and our public school system. The school system was then in its infancy, and was virtually on trial as a public experiment. It was slowly growing into great favor with the American people, and was surely preparing itself for the mighty growth which has characterized it during the last few years.

But the founders of our public schools did not

fully comprehend the all-important issues involved in their measures. They did not clearly draw the line of demarkation between Church and State, and even yet this line has not been fully drawn. Till this point has been finally settled, the question will be open for discussion, and it will receive the measure of attention that its importance demands.

Originally in the city of New York, the public school money raised was distributed "to the trustees of the Free School Society, the Orphan Asylum Society, the African Free School, and the trustees of such *incorporated religious societies* as then supported, or should establish charity schools within the city."*

It did not require a great length of time to demonstrate that this was to all practical purposes, a religious system of education. It was impossible for it to give anything like general satisfaction, therefore it soon became apparent that a change must be effected.

"In 1824 the Common Council of New York 'was authorized, once in three years, to designate the institutions and schools which should be entitled to receive the school moneys.' " This placed the whole matter in charge of the Common Council. The money was distributed to the Public School Society, the Mechanics' Society, the Orphan Asylum, and the Catholic Benevolent Society. All these institutions were unsectarian, save the latter.

This condition of affairs gave very general satis-

* We are greatly indebted to the periodicals of Harper & Brothers for many facts contained in this sketch.

faction, though by no means universal. And, as strange as it may appear, the Catholics, who were the only religious body receiving aid, were the main objectors. These were determined to break down this system in New York, and, in 1840, they began the assault. Several characters in this narrative were active in pressing forward these measures to their consummation.

Early one sultry morning in July, 1840, Father Mallory was walking slowly along one of the principal streets of New York. As he sauntered on, he would occasionally take out his watch, half mechanically, as if he had an appointment at a certain hour, and must get there precisely on time. The priest's face, heavier than it was eight years before, wore the expression of perplexed thought.

At last he reached the residence of Father Manning, and, having scrutinized his watch again, passed up the steps and rang for admission. He was at once conducted into a large room where he found several gentlemen already assembled. Prominent among them was Bishop H—, who was renowned for his ability and eloquence.

Soon after Father Mallory's arrival, the meeting was called to order with the Bishop presiding. He stated that they had met to consider the relation of the public schools to the interests of the Catholic Church. He also laid before them fully the evils that might probably result to the church from this institution, if it were not promptly put under restraint. He urged the necessity of active

measures against this new enemy that was rising to threaten their holy religion.

There was a perfect unanimity of sentiment on all that was said. There were several lines of policy suggested, discussed and rejected; but Robert Manning advocated the following, which received the hearty approbation of the Bishop: Let the "trustees of St. Patrick's, St. Peter's, St. Mary's and other schools of like names, apply to the Common Council for a share of the school moneys raised by taxation." "This claim," said Father Manning, "must be energetically pressed, for we must either break down the system or carry this measure; and, in the event we carry it, we have just what we want—a ruined School-Society. The knell of the public schools is sounded the very moment that division of the school fund is made among the different religious bodies."

Father Mallory, in a brief speech, advocated the same views, and closed with the suggestion that, for the following Tuesday evening, a general meeting should be called to set forth, in resolutions, the sentiments expressed in the present gathering. This suggestion was taken by consent and the meeting duly appointed. After some words of encouragement and exhortation, the Bishop adjourned the meeting until the following Tuesday evening.

When the appointed time came, quite a large number of men had collected at the place of meeting. The Bishop made a lengthy introductory speech, setting forth the reasons why Catholics

should be apprehensive of the continuance of the Public School-Society, as at present administered.

The meeting was enthusiastic, and the committee on resolutions offered, among several others, the following: "That the operation of the common school system, as the same is now administered, is a violation of our civil and religious rights.

That we should be unworthy our proud distinction as Americans and American citizens, if we did not resist such invasion by every lawful means in our power."

These resolutions were received with great applause, and several fiery speeches were made in their favor. Robert Manning, in his clear-cut, crystal sentences, and Father Mallory, in his abrupt, impetuous way, had added each his influence to the strong current that was sweeping on without encountering a single obstacle. To all appearances, the meeting would close without the raising of a single dissenting voice.

But when they had reached that point where a breathless pause ensued, as if all arguments had been exhausted and nothing remained but to put the question, an event occurred that showed at least one objector to the measures before the meeting.

A young man, in priestly dress, who had been sitting a quiet, unobserved spectator of the proceedings, suddenly arose and addressing the Chair said:

"As a member of the Catholic communion, and as a citizen of proud America, I wish to enter my

solemn protest against the measures which have this evening been advocated. The glory of our free institutions can be preserved only by an enlightened citizenship; and this can be assured only by public instruction. Neither private nor denominational schools can meet the ever increasing demand, and our only hope lies in the willingness of the State to train her ignorant children—and train them for her own preservation. I fail to see in what respect it is a ‘violation of our civil and religious rights,’ as the resolution specifies and as several gentlemen on this floor have so eloquently claimed. To me it is an establishment of those rights and the sure guarantee that they will be transmitted to the coming generations of our country, and will confer upon the nation’s future children the same blessings that we now so abundantly enjoy. I am free to claim here that our public school system is the bulwark of our national freedom, stronger than all of our bayonets, and armaments, and fortifications.

But, my Catholic fellow-citizens, there is a deeper reason still why I object to these resolutions. They are wrong, and for that reason should not be entertained for a single moment. It is the spectacle of a great church, in the most splendid republic of all the ages, arraying herself against an institution which is necessary to the very existence of that republic. The spirit which animates our government is inimical to any collusion of Church and State, and yet the motive back of all our actions

this evening is to place the church in such a relation to the Common Council of this city that it will become a parasite, drawing a large measure of its life from the public treasury. The whole proceeding is wrong, fatally wrong. I appeal to you as honorable men, if you would not resist such a step on the part of any Protestant church with all the eloquence of your tongue and the caustic of your pen. The public schools are not necessarily opposed to the glorious doctrine of the Catholic Church nor are they legitimate barriers to her prosperity and renown; and while I love the church and will defend her, still I also love my nation's schools, and, as a patriotic citizen, will ever be their champion and advocate."

Scarcely had the young man ceased to speak till Mallory was on his feet, his whole face ablaze and his little eyes almost emitting sparks of fire, and, vehemently shaking his fist, cried out: "The ingrate, listen to the ingrate! I took him when he was a stammering, shabby little monkey, and clothed him, and fed him, and educated him, and now see what he is—ingratitude, base ingratitude." The last words were uttered in a shriek and with dramatic emphasis.

For a few moments there was great excitement in the house. Some were hissing and sneering at the youthful speaker, and others were gesticulating violently, while there were loud cries of "Hear, hear; young Father Louis has taken the opposition."

With some difficulty the Bishop restored order,

and again Father Louis, as he had been called, rose to speak. His clear voice penetrated to every part of the room as he said: "When my sister and I were lonely orphans, with the bitter heritage of poverty, in a great city, when we were ragged, and hungry, and friendless, Father Mallory came to us and through his generosity we have received all the necessities of life and the advantages of culture. We have never ceased to be grateful. In the outbursts of passion which sometimes come to him he has inflicted on us severe punishment, and has laid us under the harsh tribute of many a penance; he has insisted on our fulfilling missions for the church of which we knew nothing—all of these have we cheerfully borne, because he was to us a preserver and protector. We shall be in the future, as we have been in the past, his steadfast, faithful children. But neither now nor ever can Father Mallory become to us the supreme director of our consciences. That the resolutions before this house are wrong, is my own individual judgment, and by that judgment I propose to stand."

When Father Louis took his seat, a dozen men sprang to their feet, clamoring to be heard. The quick, though quiet movement of Robert Manning enabled him to gain the recognition of the Bishop, and he began to speak in his calm, incisive tones:

"Our good Father Louis is very young, as you all would readily perceive from the speech he has made. The best reply to his remarks is a little experience on his part. We can not waste time

now with the declamation of our boys" (this was said with an icy smile.) "I have only one word to say on the merits of the resolutions. If the public schools do not exclude sectarianism, they are no more entitled to the school funds than are we, or any other denomination of professed Christians; if they do exclude sectarianism, then we contend that they exclude Christianity.* In either case our claim is just and right, and I therefore call for the question."

Cries of "question, question," were heard in all parts of the house, and the motion was immediately put by the Bishop. There was a demand for a standing vote, and the immense audience rose as one man, save only Father Louis, who had the courage to stand alone when the negative was called.

It is only necessary for us to chronicle one more fact in connection with the business transacted at this meeting; and this very fact is the link that joins all of this turbulent scene with the events of our story.

After much irrelevant speaking, it was at last suggested that money must be obtained from some source, in order to press successfully this claim. It was clearly argued that the profits accruing from its triumphant consummation would more than cover all probable risks in raising the necessary funds. Besides, there were other enterprises, near or remotely connected with this one, for which

* This dilemma, in almost the very language, was in the memorial offered by the Catholics to the Common Council in 1840.

capital must be had; and in the event that the money raised should not be required here, it would be found to fill a financial vacuum created by some other movement of this most remarkable church.

It so happened that Fathers Manning and Mallory were selected as a committee on finance; and after this action the meeting adjourned, subject to the call of the Bishop. Arrangements were made by these two priests that they should meet on the following morning at the residence of Robert Manning.

On the next day Father Mallory was punctual in filling his appointment. The freshness of the early morning had not passed away before he and Robert Manning were earnestly discussing the interests of the church. But, strange as it may seem, the first subject considered was not the one on which they were appointed a committee.

There was a flush of excitement on Mallory's cheek, and something disturbed in his manner, but the old cunning was hidden in his little eyes, ready to flash forth with baleful light the moment he was victor. He approached the business with this remark: "Some excitement at our meeting yesterday."

"A little," dryly responded Robert Manning, whose face wore its usual impenetrable calm.

"The church is to have a new Luther, or some other kind of reformer, I suppose," said Mallory with a half sneer.

"Oh! you refer to our young Father Louis," replied Manning with his cold smile.

“Yes. He is too conscientious by half for his own good or ours either.”

“You educated him, I believe,” retorted Robert Manning. “That fact possibly accounts for his remarkable moral development.”

Mallory winced a little under this taunt, but promptly replied: “I have always deemed it a misfortune that I did not have charge of the training of some other of my brother priests.”

“Ah!” ejaculated Father Manning. Then there was silence for a few moments, which was broken by Mallory:

“Father Louis is a young man of remarkable ability, and is capable of doing us great service, or bringing on us a world of reproach. Do you not think so?”

“Yes,” slowly responded Robert Manning. “I have been watching him closely for a long while, and am fully persuaded that it will require wise and delicate treatment to make him subserve our interests.”

“Listen,” said Mallory, as he drew his chair closer to his companion. “I have a plan by which, I think, we can readily manage him; a plan, by the way, in which his conscientious scruples will be in our favor. Make him assistant confessor at the Convent of St. Mary. You would say he is too young, but hold, I’ve thought all about that. Through the influence of the Bishop, the Pope will grant the necessary dispensation, and on this count his piety will be of the greatest value. Once

accomplish this measure and he is virtually on the shelf. He is a handsome young fellow, and you may rest assured that there will be no slackness on the part of the nuns in confessing. I think we can keep him so busy that he will not have time to trouble us on other scores. What do you say to the project, my good Father Manning?" and in his eagerness, Mallory leaned forward till his flushed face was close to that of the other priest.

An expression of surprise was never seen on the face of Robert Manning, but the thoughtful caste of his countenance indicated that the suggestion was unexpected. He remained silent, as if carefully weighing every word that had been spoken.

"Well," exclaimed Mallory impatiently, "what have you to say?"

"I think it a prudent measure, if the Pope will grant the dispensation; otherwise you know he is too young."

In his excitement, Mallory rose to his feet as he said: "You will join with me in getting the consent and recommendation of the Bishop?"

"Yes, I will do my best."

"Then it is a success. I know it," cried Mallory, joyfully. "We will secure a good riddance of my troublesome *protege*," and he rubbed his hands in glee. After a short pause, he added: "I am ready now to talk about our money matters."

"Have you matured any plans on that subject?" asked Father Manning.

"None," is the reply, "unless some portion of

the Leighton estate may be made available." As he gave this reply, Mallory's cunning eyes were narrowly watching the face of Father Manning.

"I have thought about that," was the rejoinder, "and while I dislike to take such a step, still I see no other way open. The regular contributions from our parishioners can scarcely be increased; we have exhausted for the present the resources of fairs and festivals, and I do not think it would be prudent to make another demand on the generosity of the public so soon after the thorough canvass for our new cathedral. Taking all things together, I can see no other way to get the desired amount of money, unless we draw on the Leighton estate."

"And why not?" said Father Mallory. "I think you have been unnecessarily prudent about the matter anyhow. If I had been in your place, I can tell you that the yellow gold of William Leighton would have jingled into our coffers long ago."

"You forget," replied Manning, "that the eyes of Mr. Malor and Dr. Logan are sharply watching me. I also understand that they have an eminent member of the bar who is narrowly scrutinizing all my movements in connection with this property. More than this, I have learned that they have been trying for some time to discover the whereabouts of Earnest Leighton. Now, notice, if I should betray my trust, and they should happen to locate the wandering Earnest, my bed would not be one of roses by any means. The truth is, Father Mallory, I have not the least intention of committing suicide."

Mallory began walking the floor impatiently, in deep thought with his chin resting on his chest and his hands thrust into his pockets. Suddenly he paused before Father Manning, and with the flame of passion burning in his dangerous eyes, said: "There is but one course, we *must* know where Earnest Leighton is, and then we *must*—." In the latter part of the sentence his voice sank to a low whisper.

"You give dangerous advice, my dear father," said Robert Manning. And then, after a pause, he continued: "Yes, we must find out the present habitation of Mr. Earnest, and for that purpose I sent for Billy Golyn this morning."

"Billy Golyn!" exclaimed Mallory, "why, he is the very man, green as he is."

"He is not so green after all," replied Manning, as he rang for a servant, whom he told to send in Billy Golyn.

In a few moments a man entered—an odd little man. If you had guessed at his age you might have said thirty or sixty, and then not felt very well satisfied with your effort. There was this peculiarity about him which one would notice at first glance—there was too much skin for the area of face it had to cover. His brow and cheek were furrowed and rigid, but the ridges were hard and the furrows looked as if they were ploughed out to the bed-rock. His nose was long and sharp, of a penetrating, inquisitive character; one would say that it was manufactured for the express purpose of scenting

everything that pertained to some other person's affairs. This nose was always held in just the right poise, which was an added attraction. Peering over its tip were two sharp eyes, though they had borrowed the color of his hair and thin beard, which were white, not gray. To this fact was attributable his verdant appearance, for his eyes did not show off to a good advantage unless under excitement. Resting under the tip of the above mentioned nose was a mouth that might belong to almost any sort of character. With the proper surroundings it would have been the mark of a deal of firmness; but in the ambush of that downy beard, and overshadowed by that threatening nose, which held a position unfavorably near and prominent, it became a decidedly questionable mouth. Mr. Golyn was extremely nervous and fidgety, and in some circles of society would have been termed awkward—*very*.

When he came shuffling into the room, and stood waiting to be addressed, pulling at his old wool hat, and shifting his feet from side to side, Mallory said: "Well, my Billy, you are as shaky as ever, I see."

He paid no attention whatever to this remark, but turned himself a little so as to face Robert Manning.

"Billy," said the latter, "I want to send you on a mission. Are you ready to go?"

"Ready to go"—this was a habit Billy had of repeating the last words of a sentence, and he said it in a harsh, rasping voice—"Yes, I'm ready to go."

“You remember Earnest Leighton who left us some time ago?”

“Earnest Leighton, some time ago. Yes, yes, I remember.”

“Well,” continued the priest, “we lost trace of him entirely, and we wish to know where he is. And your orders are to find him, whether dead or alive. Do you understand?”

“You understand. Yes, yes, dead or alive. Yes, I’ll find him.”

“Go now, and do not return till you bring me tidings of Earnest Leighton.”

“Tidings of Earnest Leighton. Yes, yes, I’ll do it—I will. Never fear—tidings; yes, yes.” And as he spoke his white eyes glistened, and he rubbed his hands together in a nervous, twitching manner, and he continued to mumble to himself as he shuffled out of the room and into the great world, animated by a single resolve.

As the door closed on him, Mallory said, with a chuckle: “He is Satan’s own child, Billy is, even to Satanic persistence. When he returns we will know the roost of our stray chicken.”

CHAPTER XI.

MARABEL.

It was one of those quiet, charming nights late in August. Every ray from the full moon beamed in gentleness, and there was a soft splendor shining from the faces of all the stars. It was one of those nights, peculiar in the depth of its silence, that gives to one a profound consciousness of the Infinite.

Go out and gaze upward some evening, when the moon is a perfect circle and not a breath of air is stirring; meditate but a moment, and the conviction will steal over you, that somewhere, in this universe, there is a Creator who directs all those shining orbs. These are periods of mental and moral exaltation. At such times we know we are immortal, and that He who ruleth over all is Eternal.

As the twilight deepened on this quiet evening, a lady came to the parlor window of an elegant residence on one of the most fashionable streets in New York. She made the sign of the cross, then kneeling down looked up to the heavens, with the moon beaming full in her face. This window overlooked the street, and she was hid from the observation of any one that might be passing, by the

folds of the rich curtain which she had silently drawn around her.

She seemed to be enjoying in its fullness the motionless glory of that August night. And yet a closer look would have showed you traces of anxiety in her countenance, and would have raised the suspicion that she had come to this temporary altar more for strength than for praise.

She remained in the same position for a considerable while, and then rising, closed the curtains, with a sigh, and at once lighted the room.

Her anxiety deepened. She began walking the floor with her hands clasped before her. The shadows of trouble were gathering in her face and clouding her brow. She paused before a richly carved mirror that reflected her entire person, and as she gazed, a smile dimpled the corners of her mouth, and then rippled up to her eyes and faded away in their blue depths.

It would be a fit moment to describe her while engaged in this womanly employment. But the task is a difficult one. She was, indeed, beautiful, but she belonged to her own peculiar type of womanhood. It was a beauty that grows on you with the growth of acquaintance—grows till it masters you. A dangerous kind of beauty!

Nevertheless, she was not deficient in attractions that would be readily noticed at a first meeting. She was tall, well proportioned, graceful, with one of those bewitching undulating walks. Her head had a queenly poise and was adorned with a heavy

suit of beautiful hair that was one of her perpetual charms. Fair complexion, deep blue eyes, a forehead high and white, too high for beauty in a strict sense. But her mouth was perfection—a mouth for one to love passionately.

But no one could ever see Marabel Langford smile, and then forget her. It was one of those enchanting smiles that hovers on the lips and sparkles in the eyes. It seemed the kiss of the mouth meeting the love-beam of the eye.

In such moments she was rarely beautiful with a beauty that ever deepens. To sit calmly in the full light of that smile was to surrender one's self to bondage. It was her power of conquest, and it was all the more dangerous that she was unconscious of possessing it.

Marabel Langford had been carefully educated, and to her other attractions was added a cultured mind. Her course of instruction had been so liberal, indeed, as to call forth adverse comments from those who would limit woman's knowledge to the mechanism of a biscuit rather than the architectural structure of the universe. By nature she was industrious and studious, and she embraced with a hearty zeal every opportunity of increasing the range of her information and adding to her treasures of knowledge.

One other thing may be said in her favor. Neither her accomplishments nor personal charms had the effect of impressing her with a sense of supreme importance. This is a grace that some gifted peo-

ple do not possess. She was proud, and rightfully so, but there was nothing like superciliousness or disdain in her treatment of those who were plainly her inferiors. In being a *lady* she was no less a *woman*.

With the characteristics we have already mentioned there were coupled some which were not so pleasant. She had a deal of human nature about her, and for that reason we love her. It is the point of contact in the relationship of us all.

Marabel was firm in the cause of right, and her conscience was delicately wrought. Influenced by her religious training, she was sometimes firm when right was not at stake. She would have been a religious bigot had she been less gentle. But as it was she barely escaped.

In the presence of any one whom she disliked, or who would dare to criticise her cherished church, she would become silent and stately, or aggressively ironical. On these points she was unduly sensitive, and it had a correspondingly bad effect on her.

When thrown in constant association with one whose presence irritated her, she would become subject to moody spells, which were positively disagreeable. But the re-action from these unhappy frames of mind often led her into extravagances of which she afterwards repented. These facts may account for some seeming peculiarities that may be developed in her history.

There were times, however, when agitated by

some exciting cause, her actions indicated an intensity of feeling that was truly alarming. The love trait in her seemed to be so delicately organized, so finely wrought, that a great wrong from one in whom she trusted might have the effect of awakening a counter feeling which would be potent for evil. This was only a suspicion held by some of her thoughtful friends. So far there had been nothing in her life to justify positively such an opinion. There were only a few fallen leaves to indicate the coming autumn frosts.

After surveying herself for a moment in the mirror, she turned impatiently away and continued her promenade across the room. She looked at her watch, then drew aside the curtains and peered into the street, but apparently failed to see the person whom she was expecting, for she murmured to herself with a slight frown: "I do wish he would come."

It was a full hour after this, when she was just preparing to retire to her own room, that a hasty footfall was heard on the step. She flew to the door, and, on opening it, admitted young Father Louis.

"How naughty of you to stay away so late, when you know how impatient I am," she said, as she gave him a warm, sisterly welcome.

"It was no fault of mine," he replied. "I had to obey a summons of Father Mallory, and he prolonged our interview to an unnecessary length;" and he sighed wearily.

By this time they had reached the parlor, and Marabel suddenly faced him, with an impetuous stamp of the foot, as she exclaimed bitterly: "And what did Father Mallory want with you? Nothing agreeable, I'll warrant. That man is the curse of my life, and I believe he will eventually ruin us or make us as mean as he is."

Louis opened his large brown eyes and looked at his sister wonderingly and said in a half deprecating tone: "Why, Marabel, that does not sound like you. Remember you are speaking of a Catholic priest and your own confessor. Be more guarded in giving expression to your anger, but tell me what this new trouble is."

The excited woman sank into the nearest chair, and a strange light burned in her eye as she replied: "I never liked him, and certain duties that he imposed on me to-day increased my disgust, and now that he is interfering with you, I have for him nothing but hatred. Brother, I hate him," and the little foot emphasized this positive declaration.

A serious smile came to the lips of Louis Langford, as he seated himself in a chair by his sister's side and said in his deep, earnest tone: "My little sister must be calm. I wish to know everything that Father Mallory has said to her, and she can not tell me in her present stormy mood. Let me see," he continued, as he laid his finger on her wrist, "your pulse is in a considerable flutter, and you would better wait till you can speak with that calm precision that characterizes your sex."

"You jealous man," she cried, with a light laugh. "You envy us our free and easy tongues." Then, more seriously: "Suppose I should tell you that Father Mallory insisted on my saying nothing to you about my mission?"

"He surely would not do that."

"Yes, but he did."

"And did you promise?"

"No," she said proudly, "My loyalty to the church will not make me disloyal to my only brother."

Nothing was said for several minutes; then Louis spoke, with a strain of sadness in his voice: "Tell me, Marabel, all that has happened."

Her eyes were full of tenderness as she replied: "My brother, I can not, tell you all. The privacy of the confessional restrains my tongue from much that it would utter. There are many things of which I would speak if the penalties of a broken promise did not always threaten me. And these penalties are so terrible when they are portrayed by Father Mallory. But he, the priest I hate," and there was a metallic ring in her voice, "came here this morning and asked to see me alone. He talked to me a full half hour about things indifferent before he uttered the one sentence for which alone he came.

It was the old message, that the church needed my services, and that I should not hesitate one moment, since I was so deeply indebted to one of her ministers for all that I enjoy. My dear

brother," the sweet lips trembled now and the blue eyes filled with tears, "I wish we were back in our garret-room with our crust of bread and our freedom."

She continued: "Father Mallory wishes me to pay a visit of several months to a Mrs. Livingston, who resides in Lexington, Ky. I told him I knew nothing about her, and that I had no wish to form her acquaintance. I also pleaded with him to tell me the object of this visit, but he positively declined to gratify me."

"Did he give you no commission? and have you nothing to do?" questioned Father Louis.

"Nothing, and that is what appears so strange. I can see no motive in it, unless, for some unknown reason he wishes me out of New York. He simply demands that I should visit Mrs. Livingston for an indefinite time. Now, she may be a very nice lady and all that, but I should like to have a voice in making out my list of new acquaintances."

"And he said nothing to raise a suspicion as to the object of this trip?"

"Not one word. I mean," she explained, "in our conversation of this morning," and the blood mantled to her cheek and brow. Then she added, in a lower tone: "There are some things I wish so much to tell you, if it were not for that terrible ban of secrecy that is forever over the confessional. By the pledges that have been exacted from me, I felt assured that soon there would be a new revelation, but it is yet to come, though I think, we now

have its beginning. I am a true Catholic, and yet I tremble at the way in which a young girl's heart is unveiled when she is alone with the priest. It is an awful power, and dangerous for any set of men to wield. And, when I think about it in all its perilous aspects, I have moments of painful doubting too full of anguish to tell. Is it right, my darling brother, is it right, to rob a young girl of the joyous secret of her heart's budding love? Are none of our hearts fresh enough to hold an idol of their own, free from the inquisitive glance of our priestly guides?"

Father Louis placed his fingers on the lips of his sister, as he said: "I greatly fear Marabel, that you have caught the spirit of heresy. I have always looked upon you as the most devout Catholic, but you talk very wildly to-night."

"I am a devout Catholic," she exclaimed impetuously, "but there is something revolting in telling to an unsympathetic ear every emotion of my heart. They are surely very much afraid that I will marry some Protestant, that they bind me in the chains of a hundred promises. And the fetters are galling to my very soul." Then she continued in tones of impassioned tenderness: "How fondly I love the dear, dear old church! Her hoary record, reaching back through the centuries—her august doctrines, her glorious host of immortal heroes and martyrs! Ah, my brother, how I cherish these. Possibly I should be more willing to submit patiently to discomfiture, in order to contribute my little mite

in re-producing the golden age of the church. To contemplate the vision of an accomplished Catholic unity—the church in the full splendor of its universal reign—is too wildly delightful for less than impassionate viewing. It is the one cherished dream of my religious life. And yet,” in tones almost of plaintive sadness, “and yet, with this strong incentive, it is nearly unbearable to have a man, though he be a priest, to riot through my secret thoughts with his dangerous and uncertain questions. Brother, if ever I give my love to any man, it will be too deep and true—all too sacred—to be bandied about even in a confessional. And yet it seems to me that I am entrapped in a net of promises that makes escape impossible. This is what is breaking my heart. Where is there an avenue of escape? I can not lie, and still I feel it impossible for me to tell every love-word and every love-thought. Oh, the depths of such degradation!”

Her queenly form was swayed by her strong emotions, and there came into those clear, tender eyes, a look that was something akin to desperation.

For a moment, Louis Langford regarded his sister with a look of surprise and sympathy. There was a dawning revelation in his soul that all was not right. But how often do we catch a glimpse of a single ray of light only to see it vanish to leave us in deeper darkness than before.

When he at last spoke there was a volume of suppressed emotion in his voice; “My sister, you

astonish me beyond measure. In your excitement you have surely fallen into error. Confession is one of the sacraments of our Holy Church, and it can not be wrong. You remember the language of the sixth canon of the Council of Trent: 'Whosoever shall deny that the sacramental confession was instituted by divine command, or that it is necessary to salvation; or shall affirm that the practice of *secretly confessing to the priest alone*, as it has been ever observed, from the beginning, by the Catholic Church, and is still observed, is foreign to the institution and command of Christ, and is a human invention, LET HIM BE ACCURSED.' Marabel, I plead with you to reflect on what you have said; you can scarcely realize the dangers by which you are threatened. For my sake, and for your own, be more prudent in the future."

"I will promise you almost anything, my brother, only do not look so sad and troubled. I do not deny any sacrament of the church, but when certain questions are raised, it pains me to go through the ordeal of confession. But forgive me this time and I shall try to wound you no more."

"That is a dear, good sister," said Father Louis; "but tell me, when will you leave on your visit?"

"My Grand Pasha has set this day week as the utmost limit. My utter ignorance as to the object of the visit gives to it some little interest, for I shall be wide awake all the time watching for developments. If I were a man, now, my curiosity would irritate me beyond endurance."

"I congratulate you," was rejoined, "on belonging to that sex which is never disturbed by that troublesome propensity. I have always admired the contented disposition of our mother Eve."

"Ah, poor Eve! the desire to please her husband and her power of imitation wrought her ruin," replied Marabel.

"A truce to your smartness for this evening, my little sister," said Louis, "as we have more serious matters that demand our attention."

Then this brother and sister, so strangely placed in life, began to speak of their temporary separation. As true as they were to all the doctrines of their faith, they were slightly suspicious, to say the least, of certain of her priests. They were careful to make arrangements for a correspondence that should escape the observation of any one who might deem it his duty to pry into their personal affairs. When all matters had been satisfactorily adjusted between them, Father Louis took his departure.

The August night was far spent before this consultation was ended. A comparative silence had settled over the great city when the young priest went out alone with his thoughts. He was not free from agitation, and there was a pain at his heart that he could not understand. If the storm in his soul had settled down to a calm inquiry, the questions would have been: Is not the confessional wrong? And is not my sister's protest right? Should any man stand between a human soul and its Savior?

But he did not ask these questions ; he did not think of them. He was only conscious of an unrest, painful indeed, but in his effort to analyze the causes, he could trace them no farther than to the fact of his sister's intended departure. Accepting this as a solution of the matter, he endeavored to regain his wonted cheerfulness. In this he may succeed.

There was one other thing of which he was not insensible : He had gone to see his sister on this evening, for the special purpose of acquainting her with certain changes that were likely to occur in his own life—changes with which he was not altogether pleased. The disturbed condition in which he found her, induced him to refrain from mentioning his own troubles. With brave cheerfulness, he was bearing his own grievances, with those of his sister super-added.

When the appointed day came, it found Marabel ready to begin her journey to Lexington. In due course of time the trip was ended, and she was received at the residence of Mrs. Livingston.

This worthy lady had passed the bloom of her youth, but she was still active and energetic. The lamented Livingston, who had departed this life a few years before, was the third husband whom this enthusiastic woman had led to the altar. Some of her impertinent neighbors very plainly hinted that she was yet willing to bestow her well tried affections, together with her large bank account, upon some suitable applicant. In all probability there

was a vein of maliciousness in this bold accusation. Indeed, the "Madam," as she was called, had been heard to intimate, on numerous occasions, that she could not be induced to think of marrying, unless it should be in a case where the deep attachment of the gentleman threatened wreck to his life if she declined to listen to his suit. Rather than such a dire calamity should happen, she would surrender her never-failing love. Such tender regard for the feelings of others is worthy of profound admiration.

She gave Marabel a warm reception; indeed, it was one of her characteristics to give every one a warm reception. She was delighted that her city friend had found it in her heart to pay a visit to Lexington. The quaint Marabel thought it never originated in *her* heart.

But with busy tongue the estimable Mrs. Livingston kept up an incessant conversation as she accompanied her visitor to the apartments arranged for her use. But, once in her own room, Marabel complained of weariness, and begged for a cup of tea and the privilege of being left alone. With the utmost politeness, Mrs. Livingston granted her request, saying, as she bade her good-night, that she would send a servant to attend on all her wants.

In a few days Marabel was established in the house of her hostess, and Mrs. Livingston spared no pains in introducing her to her own circle of acquaintances. Already several ladies had called, and one notable evening quite a gay group of young

ladies and gentlemen were to tea. Added to these was the parish priest, who never lacked for attention at the hands of Mrs. Livingston, as she was a most scrupulous Catholic. On this evening, the larger part of Father Neigler's time was devoted to Marabel.

Two weeks later, it was the first day for the new session at Transylvania; the Madam proposed to Marabel that they should return the call of Mrs. Stanley. She had already explained that Mrs. Stanley was not in her "set" exactly; "She keeps boarders, you know, my dear," she had said, "and I only visit her because she seems to think so much of me." And, for the sake of that love, they called on Mrs. Stanley.

It was at the close of this visit, when they were on the eve of starting home, that Marabel Langford first met Earnest Leighton and Gerould Wingrove. To her there was nothing extraordinary in this meeting, or in the introduction which naturally followed.

They lingered a few moments on the veranda in conversation, the more forward Gerould claiming the attention of Marabel, while the quiet and shy Earnest was talking to Mrs. Livingston. That lady said archly, in a tone pitched for the ear of her listener alone: "You think her beautiful, I should judge, from your admiring glances?"

Earnest colored slightly, because he was conscious of watching Marabel more closely than he was obliged to do in strict politeness. He was a

little annoyed that the sharp-eyed Madam should notice it, so he said, very indifferently: "Ah, I beg your pardon, Madam, but I was observing more particularly her striking attitude. I think she would be graceful in motion."

"You do," said the Madam dryly, with an inquisitive look gathering around her inquisitive little mouth. She was just the least bit suspicious that the reply was intended to be evasive.

But she tapped Earnest on the arm with her parasol, and said in the same guarded tone: "I wish to make Miss Langford's visit pleasant, and for that purpose I desire some young gentlemen's company. Consider that you have a standing invitation to call as often as it suits your convenience, and I trust you may come at an early day."

Earnest expressed his gratitude for the honor, and promised to comply with the terms of the invitation.

Here the two currents of our story meet.

CHAPTER XII.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS.

Gerould Wingrove recklessly whirled his hat across the room, where it landed on the bed in a somewhat dilapidated condition, threw himself into a chair, perched his feet on top of the table, and exclaimed enthusiastically: "She is the finest girl I ever saw. What heavenly blue eyes, what a queenly carriage, what a statuesque figure! The fair-haired Helen was not fairer than is she. I tell you, my old chum, she is an angel. Why, it requires no stretch of imagination to paint her with celestial wings. I tell you, sir, that I am overwhelmed. I am hopelessly in love."

"Don't be a fool, Gerould," said Earnest Leighton in a quiet tone, as he placed a chair near a window which happened to overlook the street by which the Madam and Marabel were returning home.

"Don't be a fool," cried Gerould; "splendid advice, my disinterested friend. There is nothing like keeping cool under such exciting circumstances, so as to be able to take advantage of every opportunity that may present itself. I do not fail to observe," he continued, coming to the side of Earnest, "that my adviser has selected, with due

deliberation, a most charming point of observation, which was wholly unnoticed by me owing to my delicious agitation." And the speaker laid his hand on his heart, as he gazed after the receding figures.

"You are in a boisterous mood to-night, Gerould," replied Earnest. "It is not unusual for me to sit by this window, as you are well aware."

"Oh! but my saintly Earnest, your conscience will not allow you to deny that Miss Langford was first in your thoughts when you so adroitly selected this seat."

Earnest remained silent for a moment, as he reflectively watched the disappearing ladies. A consciousness was stealing into his heart that he had put himself to unnecessary pains to appear wholly indifferent to his observing friend. He was certain that he did not feel that way, and why not act his true feelings. He was troubled and uneasy about something, he could not tell what. Why should Miss Langford make such an impression on him!—an impression full of unrest.

He was thinking rapidly, as his room-mate stood by him awaiting a reply—thinking of things that the friend so near to him could never guess. He reasoned that it was not surprising that he should meet a lady from New York, and that the Madam should be the one to introduce her. It was within the bounds of possibility for this to happen a hundred times. And yet, there was in his very soul a strange feeling to account for. A saving thought

came into his mind and changed the current of his reasoning, till it flowed to a satisfactory conclusion. The whole trouble was to be found in his agitated condition at the time of the introduction. He had just been living over the dark experiences of his life, leading his friend by the hand through the gloomy days of his own history, and the bad sounds, awakened by their tread, had not yet died out in his heart. This was the secret key that unlocked the mystery of his perplexed condition. Miss Langford had nothing whatever to do with it. So he turned to Gerould with a smile and said :

“How anxious and inquisitive you are. Are you really to play the roll of a father-confessor, and am I to divulge all the secrets of my thoughts? or, do you think that it is necessary that every one should be inspired with the same zeal for Miss Langford that characterizes your enthusiastic self?”

“You are trying to dodge the question, my worthy chum. Now listen, did you not come to this window to observe Miss Langford? and do you not feel an interest in her that you are endeavoring to conceal from your honorable and penetrating classmate? I tell you, sir, your actions are highly suspicious, and they would be readily noticed by a person less shrewd than my humble self. Come, you are a criminal at the bar of justice, you have heard the charges, now answer. ‘Guilty, or, not guilty?’ ”

“If your honor would pardon me,” said Earnest,

with mock respect, "I would begin my defense by establishing the antecedent probability of my innocence. You can assign no possible reason for my coming to this window to stare after those ladies, when you know I have Mrs. Livingston's passport into the presence of Miss Langford. She gave me an urgent invitation to call early on the lady in question, and when I wish to establish a point of observation the location selected will be the neat little parlor of that most problematic Madam."

"So the Madam has already issued you a card of invitation, has she?" questioned Gerould, with a laugh that was not entirely free from nervousness. "Well, I am still ahead of you. The gracious lady herself has kindly consented to my visiting her, and I shall not be slow in taking advantage of so special a privilege."

"Consented, has she?" rejoined Earnest, with a tinge of irony in his tone, and a quiet, irritating smile that characterized him when he wished to say very much more than his words of themselves would express. "I have no doubt but that even I could have secured a similar invitation, if I had pressed the point."

"You are a vexatious rascal, Earnest," said Gerould, laughing and slapping his friend on the shoulder. "You see right into a fellow without any mercy, when you take a notion to give your sarcasm a little airing. But tell me seriously," and his tone changed from banter to pleading, "what you do think of Miss Langford?"

"I scarcely have a definite opinion," was rejoined thoughtfully. "I saw her but a moment, and had no conversation with her. I think she would pass for beautiful, she is certainly graceful, and, from all appearances, I should judge her to be intelligent and accomplished. I incline to the opinion that she is an attractive woman, but—" here he paused and slowly drummed with his fingers on the window sill.

"But what," cried Gerould, giving him a vigorous shake. "Don't stop, you were getting along splendidly, expressing my feelings exactly, only you lack enthusiasm in handling your subject. Proceed."

"But," continued Earnest, "judging from her company, and certain trinkets and ornaments that she wore, I would say she was a Catholic. Now—well—pshaw—old fellow, you know my opinion on that subject."

"Yes, I know you are one of the best fellows in the world, with one of the most abominable weaknesses. You are an intolerant bigot in your Protestant convictions. It always has seemed to me a strange incongruity in one so sensible. Now, here I am, raised wholly under Protestant influences, scarcely know anything about the Catholics, still, all things being equal and the proper motive being present, I should not hesitate a moment to offer myself and fortune to Miss Langford, conditioning on my part, that she should wear her crucifix, attend mass, occasionally invite in her

priest to tea, and freely discharge other similarly pious duties."

"How would you be affected by the knowledge," asked Earnest, "that a confidence existed between your wife and her priest, which, under no circumstances could be broken to you?"

"Oh! well, such a case as that is scarcely probable. Of course, now, I should object to any familiarity on the part of the antique-dressed gentleman. And if I had any reason to suppose that any pranks were being played on me—well, I shouldn't like to say just what I would do. You know that I am an excitable, impulsive wretch, and I shouldn't wonder if some clever priest got his neck broke. But in all seriousness, Earnest, such things as that are born of your prejudice, and have no existence in fact."

"I tell you they have an existence in fact," said Earnest warmly. "Why, it was only recently that I read in a paper, an account of a Roman Catholic priest being tried for abusing a member of his church, because she refused to take her children from the free-schools at his command. Now notice, the defense set up was that the transactions of the confessional were to be kept secret; that the woman knew this, and if she should violate this solemn obligation she was unworthy of belief. Witnesses, members of the Catholic Church, were examined, who testified that, according to the canons of the church, whatever insult a priest might offer a woman at the confessional, *she was bound*

to keep it secret from her husband! Are you so blind that you can not see under what solemn obligations every penitent is placed when she goes to the altar of the confessional?"

"Oh! pshaw, now Earnest you found that in a newspaper, and you dole it out to me for unquestionable fact. Do, I pray you, spare my feelings, for these newspapers are such prodigious liars. I mean by that, they misrepresent facts in a pious kind of way, you know. Now, I'll warrant that you saw that notice in a religious journal, which, of course, always speaks in the most exact terms of those who may happen to differ from it."

"Yes, I saw it in a religious journal, but it was taken from a secular paper, and it records a fact that happened in open court. But if you are not satisfied with this, I will give you some evidence that you can not impeach. St. Liguori on the Commandments and Sacraments, says: 'A penitent at the confessional should imagine himself to be a criminal, condemned to death, bound by as many chains as he has sins to confess, and presenting himself before a confessor *who holds the place of God!* and who alone can loose his bonds and deliver him from hell!' Then, the Catechism of Trent declares: 'The priest, as the vicerent of Jesus Christ, is bound to eternal secrecy, by every law, human and divine!' Again: 'Secrecy should be strictly observed, as well by *penitent* as priest; and hence, because, in any such circumstances, secrecy must be insecure, no one can, on any

account, confess by messenger or letter.' These are authorities in the Catholic Church, and they sustain my position, and ought to be conclusive to you "

"I can not see why people are so prejudiced," responded Gerould impatiently. "Now, I am sure that there are many good members in the Catholic Church. You seem to think them all desperately vile and wicked. I don't believe any such thing. A whole host of them are—"

"Hold a moment," interrupted Earnest, "you are under the pressure of too much steam, and have run off the track. I never said the members were desperately vile and wicked. I have been speaking of the doctrines of the church, and not the character of its private members. I hold that the confessional is obscured by all the mysteries of secrecy, and it is assailed by all of those temptations incident to a position in life where one's actions are hidden, and no word of information can be spoken concerning them. It is not in human nature to withstand such temptations. If Gerould Winegrove wishes a wife who listens to questions and returns answers of which she can never give the slightest intimation to him, let him marry a woman whose religious convictions prompt her to kneel in the confessional. I neither wish, nor shall I have, such a wife. She may be as pure as an angel all through her life, but to me it would be unbearable to know that she was pouring into the ear of another man the deepest thoughts of her heart—thoughts

that she dare not breathe to me, Gerould ;” and Earnest rose to his feet, his deep voice trembling with suppressed feeling and his open gray eyes burning with the fires of excitement. “Gerould, if I should meet with a woman, the loveliest of all women, if she should stand the peerless queen of all her sex in fairness of person and accomplishments of mind, if she should inspire me with a love stronger than all the combined passions of my soul, and then, if, in the moment of my wildest ecstasy, I should learn that she was a devout Catholic, I should break the chains of my bondage, even if the fires of my love were quenchless and their burnings were deadly.”

Earnest began walking the floor, and Gerould gazed at him with a puzzled look, as if he were trying to fathom the cause of such feelings. Presently the former said: “I have no idea, Gerould, that you sympathize with my opinions, but they are simply part of my very life—they have grown with my growth.”

Gerould laughed a little, but replied with just the least trace of soberness in his tone: “Well, to be honest, I do not. If I loved a woman, and she were gracious enough to love me in return, I should marry her if she were a Catholic ten times over. The confessional may be a bad box, as you have said, but I should consent to my wife’s sitting in it occasionally, for the sake of her charming company the remainder of the time. By the way, Miss Langford may not be a Catholic, we are not sure of that, you know.”

“Oh! I beg your pardon,” said Earnest in a bantering way, “I did not know you were really thinking of marrying Miss Langford. Pray, let me know long enough before the event to extend congratulations. Of course I shall say nothing about the suddenness of this attachment, the decisive promptness in settling so important a matter, or the variable temper of my worthy friend.”

“All I have to say in answer to such an elegant and complimentary speech,” replied Gerould, “is that my only regret has reference to the uncertain and unsettled condition of the affair, more than to anything else. I will risk my first impression of the queenly lady, and am not at all horrified at the probable pranks that my variable temper may play me. But I am not of a jealous disposition, nor do I fear rivalry, so I suggest that, together, we shall pay our respects to Miss Langford. By this means you can do honor to the invitation of the Madam, and I shall avail myself of the privilege granted by the young lady in person. What do you say, old boy, to this arrangement?”

“I say,” rejoined Earnest, positively, “that you have no need to fear rivalry from *me*.”

“Pshaw, now, old fellow, don’t look so everlastingly solemn,” said Gerould, “you work on my delicate feelings, you know. Don’t, I beseech you, destroy my appetite by your sober face. You promised to go, did you not?”

“Yes.”

“Well, to keep your word or not to keep it, that is the question.”

“I shall keep it.”

“Why in the name of common sense, then, can’t you go with me?”

“I can.”

“Why didn’t you say so then?”

“There, that is the tea-bell,” said Earnest, “come along, old fellow, I am anxious to see how much your appetite is affected.

CHAPTER XIII.

OTHER IMPRESSIONS.

It would scarcely be possible to deny that Mrs. Livingston possessed, in a very large measure, the delicate gift of curiosity. It would, indeed, be difficult to trace this remarkable trait to its origin. Many of her gentle friends, in the privacy of the sewing society, and during her absence, had tried, with most exemplary patience, to explain the presence of this most extraordinary quality in one of their sex. This self-constituted tribunal returned the verdict that she received it by direct inheritance from her parental ancestors. This opinion was held unanimously, and was a source of much satisfaction to the sewing society. It was, indeed, no small feat to settle, without a dissenting voice, such a question, in such a manner. They were rightly proud of their achievement.

But even the recognized authority of this society, on questions so occult, was not sufficiently great to silence all gain-sayers. A young man, of whom all the mammas in the neighborhood had prophesied a bad end, had quietly called in question this apparently just decision. We have no intention of defending this misguided young man. Possibly age brought to him the wisdom that was denied in

his youth. But, however this may be, he did, as a question of fact, intimate that the conclusion of the society was erroneous. To his discredit be it said that he went further than this. He boldly announced that the trait under consideration was necessary to the full adornment of woman. That it possessed all the fascination and charm of a natural grace. That it was one of the original elements of her composition, and was necessary to the completion of her character. In one fatal sentence he covered himself with shame, by declaring that Mrs. Livingston was no exception to her sex. It is difficult to conceive how any well balanced mind could reach conclusions so clearly false. We have for such mental aberrations nothing but pity.

And yet we must repeat, Mrs. Livingston possessed curiosity in an eminent degree. She was, also, thoroughly well posted in all of those local items, which, in the aggregate, constitute gossip. We do not mean by this that she was especially communicative, but that she was remarkably absorptive. She consequently had on hand a fund of information, that for some purposes might be made useful. She never lost an available opportunity to increase this fund. But one thing may be truly said of her—when requested by her priest to perform any duty, she performed it without a single question. She followed her instructions blindly, with a faith that implicitly believed that, regardless of the means, the outcome would be right.

In this spirit she received the commands of the parish priest, concerning Marabel Langford, without pressing her inquiries beyond that which it was necessary she should understand in order to do fully her duty. But she had no scruples of this kind in regard to Marabel herself. Any information she could glean from her visitor, she viewed as her legitimate property. And she was indefatigable in applying all those gentle arts of persuasion which she thought best adapted to elicit the coveted intelligence. Her measure of success, however, was not equal to the energy of her efforts.

At this point, she and Marabel were laboring under a mutual misapprehension as to the amount of knowledge possessed by the other. The Madam did not suppose that her visitor came on so long a journey without having in view some definite object. She did not seem to comprehend that others might blindly obey their church, as well as herself. She looked upon Marabel as being the depository of the very information for which she so greatly longed.

On the other hand, Marabel reasoned that it was impossible that no one at Lexington should be acquainted with the object of her mission. Some one must be fully informed as to all its details. But who was that person? This was to her a question of painful interest. She anxiously sought its answer, prompted by no mean curiosity. She was conscious, all the while, of a dread in her heart, as if she could see slowly approaching some horrible calamity. She attributed this unhappy feeling

to her anomalous situation. Her hope of relief lay in discovering what her superiors expected her to perform. But before she could gain this knowledge, it was needful that she should first find in whose possession it was.

Her quick mind decided at once that the secret lay between the Madam and Father Neigler, the parish priest. There was a strong reason in favor of both of them. The priestly office of the one made it highly probable that he would be chosen for the work; the close association of the other with herself, coupled with her enthusiastic loyalty to the church, rendered it altogether possible that she would be entrusted with the commission. Certain little incidents that were repeatedly happening, finally led Marabel to the conclusion that the Madam was the one who had been honored by the choice of Father Mallory. She therefore acted accordingly.

This little contest between the ladies was carried on in the most respectful manner. And yet it could not have failed to furnish some amusing features to an outsider, who might have known that each was striving to get information from the other, which the *other* did not possess. We fancy the parish priest was just this outsider. Knowing, as he did, the peculiar character of woman, it will always be an open question, whether he should have remained silent or should have spoken. Possibly the discipline of his church was stronger than his sympathy with anxious human nature.

The Madam and Marabel were on their way home from Mrs. Stanley's. The distance was only a few squares. The former seemed anxious to talk, the latter equally anxious to be silent. Marabel was convinced, after some reflection, that she had been taken to Mrs. Stanley's for a purpose, and that the Madam knew the meaning of that purpose. She felt herself to be ignorant of it, consequently stood at a disadvantage.

A cloud of thought had gathered on the Madam's sharp face, but it cleared away as she made a remark that was to be the entering wedge of the conversation :

"Those young gentlemen are students," she said.

"Mr. Wingrove intimated as much to me," was the brief rejoinder.

"They both graduate this year," replied the Madam.

"Again the gentleman has preceded you in giving that information," was replied, in tones that manifestly indicated a desire to drop the conversation.

"Mr. Leighton is said to be brilliant, and it is generally supposed that he will carry the honors of his class," continued the Madam, as she slyly watched her companion from the corner of her right eye, which keenly peered out from under an ingeniously arranged curl that cunningly hung above it.

Marabel gave a slight shrug of her shoulders, and then assumed the position of questioner : "Do you not think Mr. Wingrove the handsomer of the two?"

“No, I don’t,” said the Madam, with some positiveness, as if she had long since made up her mind on this question, and deemed any such opinion as impertinent. “Do you?”

“Oh! I did not pay much attention to Mr. Leighton, as I was engaged in conversation with his friend. I think Mr. Wingrove fine looking, and took it for granted that he was, in this respect, the superior of the two. A few moments’ conversation with Mr. Leighton might change this immature opinion.” And this was said in a tone and with an air that plainly indicated a seeming lack of interest in the subject.

By this time they had reached the residence of Mrs. Livingston, and Marabel ran up to her room at once, without giving the Madam an opportunity of pursuing the conversation any further. She closed and locked the door after her, threw herself into a chair near the window, and sighed: “I am puzzled, so badly puzzled.” The best method of getting at Marabel’s annoying thoughts is to let her tell them in her own way, and for that purpose we insert a letter which she wrote on this occasion to her brother in New York:

LEXINGTON, SEPT. —, 1844.

My Dearest Brother: I told you in my last letter that my next would contain some notices of Lexington and the surrounding country, but I am now inclined to place the redemption of that promise still in the future. I am bewildered by my surroundings, and much need your brotherly advice. The Madam, as everybody calls Mrs. Livingston, is a perfect enigma to me. A suspicion occasionally steals over me, that I have invested her with altogether too much importance. I was forced to choose

between Father Neigler and the Madam, so, for many reasons, I selected the Madam as the knowing one, but I fear that I have missed the mark.

I wish I could describe the Madam to you, but I am not equal to the task. She is *awful* funny looking. Sharp-eyed, sharp-faced, sharp-nosed, sharp-witted, sharp-tongued, a thin, short form, set off with sharp angles, adorned with front curls—that is the Madam. She is marriageable, too; how sorry I am that priests are not allowed to indulge in hopes matrimonial. This charming creature is my *chaperon*, and she *chaperons* me most thoroughly. So far I have not escaped her watchful eyes for one moment, save only when locked in my own room.

This afternoon we called on Mrs. Stanley, who boards students attending college here. I met two of these students, and one of them sorely puzzles me. His name is Earnest Leighton. I surely have heard that name before—and I thought nothing about him when first introduced, but the actions of the Madam excited my suspicion. She was a little distance from where I was standing with Mr. Wingrove—the other student—and she was speaking cautiously to Mr. Leighton, too low for me to hear what was said, but I am certain I was the subject of conversation. Now, no woman can bear to be knowingly talked about without having her curiosity excited. Mine is raving, furious, unbearable.

Besides this, I am annoyed with the thought that Mr. Leighton is in some way connected with my past life. I am vexed that I can neither call up this connection nor get rid of this thought. Leighton, Leighton, where have I heard the name? Where have I known it? My only hope is, my brother, that you can furnish me with a solution of this problem. I am satisfied beyond a doubt, that this gentleman has something to do with my visit to Lexington, but I have not the most remote idea what that something is.

Can it be possible that Father Mallory knows Mr. Earnest Leighton, and has a deep reason for wishing me to become acquainted with him? If I had my choice neither his nor Mr. Wingrove's acquaintance would be cultivated. They are both Protestants, so I have understood, and you know my special antipathy. I have never associated with this class of persons, and should now prefer to be excused. The whole course of my edu-

cation has been calculated to intensify my prejudices, and I do not believe I could esteem, with a tolerable friendship, one who was not a member of the true church.

Now, my dear brother, write me a very long letter, giving me all the news, and telling me what you know of Mr. Leighton, and above all things, I beg you, write at once.

Your loving sister,

MARABEL.

CHAPTER XIV.

FATHER LOUIS' REPLY.

NEW YORK, OCT. —, 1844.

My Dear Sister: It was only this morning that your letter was received, and I hasten to reply in order to relieve you as far as possible from your present anxiety. I deeply regret that my little sister is subject to so much annoyance. I think I can remove the perplexity concerning Earnest Leighton, by recalling certain facts that occurred within your memory.

You have not forgotten, I am sure, our old home in the garret of that wretched tenement-house. I shall always recollect those trial-days, when we were half-clothed, and our meals were often made from a crust of dry bread. During that hard period in our experiences, there was one rich man who was to us a kind and helpful friend. It was Mr. Leighton, the eminent and prosperous merchant, and the father of Earnest. He gave me employment when he did not need my services, and he was slowly but surely advancing me to a position that would furnish us with an independent support.

I received from him innumerable acts of kindness, and was frequently benefited by his fatherly advice. Of all the men whom I have ever met, that were in a position to render me assistance, he alone has been unselfish and disinterested. I shall always cherish his memory as my large-hearted, generous benefactor.

I know you can remember having heard me speak of him often, but especially will you recall the time of his death. He and his wife were victims of the cholera, during the period of its fearful prevalence. Father Manning, who is his half-brother, became the guardian of his children, and administrator of his estate. It is rumored that Rena Leighton died, and Earnest, rebelling against the discipline of his uncle, made his escape and fled, we know not whither. An exhaustive search was immediately made, but with barren results.

Some three years ago, Billy Godyn, the church's detective, received orders to find Earnest Leighton, whether dead or alive. He was absent from the city for a very long while, and had only returned a few days before you were instructed to visit Lexington. Grouping these facts together, they impress me very strongly with the opinion that Earnest has everything to do with your mission. But I know not the motive. It is another scheme of Father Mallory to accomplish some hidden purpose.

But, above all things, beware of Father Neigler. Rest assured that he is the agent in Lexington. Catholic priests do not trust old women with important commissions, even if they be as accomplished and attractive as the Madam. Be guarded and watchful in everything you do, and possibly you may yet penetrate Father Mallory's design.

But one other statement I wish to make concerning Earnest Leighton. A Langford may readily forgive an injury, but he can never forget an act of kindness. Through the good deeds of his father, Earnest has a claim upon us that can not be readily canceled. Be careful that your religious prejudice does not lead you into slighting one who is the unfortunate son of a noble and generous family. I know it is not necessary to urge this point upon my sister, who always has such a delicate regard for the feelings of others.

And now, my little sister, allow me to be egotistical enough to say some things about myself. Just before you started to Lexington, I learned that Father Mallory had a little plan on foot to make me assistant confessor to the Convent of St. Mary. I was too young and inexperienced for the place, and it was contrary to the canons of our church. I thought I could easily defeat a movement that was so clearly wrong. But in this I have been bitterly disappointed. The dispensation of our Most Holy Father was secured, though I entered my protest through Father Manning. And for the last month, I have been discharging the duties of my new position.

I am free to confess to you, that I do not like the duties of my present office. It is opening up to me some phases of life, with which I have heretofore remained unacquainted. They are not of such a character as to elevate my opinion of the convent system, which is such an important factor in our church's strength. There are some strange scenes enacted within these silent walls.

There are some mysteries that will await the revelation of the great judgment day. The corner-stone of their foundation is *secrecy*, and it is also the tower of their strength.

But I have come in contact with one person of whom I must speak. She is a young lady of apparently eighteen years of age, and has been in the convent nearly ever since she can remember. When I first saw her my sympathies became greatly excited. She is a fair, fragile creature, that seems to be carrying a weight of sorrow around with her. But there is a calm firmness in everything she does, which shows that the weakness of her body has not affected her placid temper, or the strength of her will.

On account of her gentle nature, the inmates of the convent call her Sister Angelica. She was born in the Protestant faith, and with all the care of the Mother Superior and the association of the sisters, she still clings, in part, to the religion of her mother. She can not be induced to confess, nor will she pray to any of the saints. She cheerfully conforms to a certain portion of our worship, while other parts of it seem to fill her with repugnance. Every influence of the convent, from the most patient persuasion to the most rigid discipline, has been tried in vain.

While refusing to yield her conscientious convictions to the dictation of others, she has at the same time conducted herself in a manner so gentle that she has won the love of the entire sisterhood. The Superior is extremely solicitous for her conversion. She requested me to use all my influence to effect this desirable end.

A few days since I had a long conversation with Sister Angelica. It was my cherished wish to ascertain the difficulties in her mind that prevented her from fully conforming to all the canons of the Catholic communion.

When she first came into the room where I was awaiting her, my heart bled as I gazed upon the fair and frail image before me. A face of marble whiteness, save on either cheek, where there was a flush of crimson; large, lustrous eyes that were so intensely bright, a trembling form that almost tottered in its weakness—was the vision of Sister Angelica. It was indeed a vision, so unearthly was her appearance. She carried in her hand a white handkerchief, which she occasionally pressed to her lips as if by a strong effort of will she would refrain from coughing.

With a scarcely audible sigh of exhaustion, she sank into a chair, and said: "The Mother Superior informs me that Father Louis wishes to converse with me."

My dear sister, I can not express to you my surprise—my utter bewilderment. I was to convert this woman, who sat before me the incarnation of purity and innocence. A woman into whose face I could not gaze without feeling myself guilty. She was one of the few of earth whose very expression is a perpetual rebuke to sin. It was a face in which there was the mingled light of heaven and of earth—the borrowed radiance from heaven that is reflected from a soul that feels its weary struggle to be nearly ended, and the elimination of human sorrow and human regrets that belong to our earthly relations.

It was several moments before I could speak, and then I said simply: "You seem to be unwell."

She smiled the saddest, sweetest smile I ever saw, as she rejoined with the single word: "Yes." But there was in it the touching pathos that belongs to the silent sorrow of a broken life.

I did not know what else to say, so I asked: "How long have you been in delicate health?"

"My health has not been good for several years," she replied.

"Did you inherit your feeble constitution from your parents?" I asked, with cruel carelessness.

"My parents!" she gasped, as a paroxysm of pain swept over her face. Then, recovering herself, she said: "I know little or nothing of my parents, but, as a girl, I was robust and hearty."

I can not tell you why, but I felt greatly embarrassed, and my next remark was an unfortunate blunder. I said: "You possibly have brought on your illness by some thoughtless exposure."

She looked straight at me with those clear, honest eyes, as she replied in tones of great gentleness: "No, Father Louis, in a large measure I am out of harmony with your church; it was thought wise to discipline me, and I am a victim of what I call the cruelty of the convent."

"I have no doubt," I rejoined, "that the seemingly harsh treatment, to which you were subjected, was intended for the good of your soul."

"It was *really* harsh," she said, "and whatever effect it might have had on my soul, I am sure it was sadly at the expense of my body."

With her image before me, in my very heart I knew she spoke the truth. There are many things in our convents that are severely cruel. I could not justify these, and yet I was called upon to reconcile this pure-minded woman to those very things that my own soul abhorred. With me it was an impossible task. I felt a sympathy for her that I have never felt for any other being. And, under the pressure of this feeling, I said:

"Sister Angelica, I am sorry for you in your distress, and I desire to help you. Will you not trust me? Tell me all you know of your past life, of your present grief, and of your ungratified wishes, and I pledge myself to be your steadfast friend and your earnest helper."

Her face flushed scarlet for a moment, and then, if possible, became paler than before, and there came into her eyes a wistful look, so full of tender pleading. Her lips moved as if she were going to speak, but her words were checked by a sudden coughing, while she pressed her handkerchief close to her mouth, and when removed was covered with spots of crimson.

When she had fully recovered herself, she said in a weak tone: "Yes, I can trust you, and the consuming wish of my life is to have my liberty. Let me have freedom, outside the walls of this convent—freedom to worship God as my mother did. I have prayed for a deliverer, and I have waited—waited so long and so wearily. You surely will not disappoint me, and forsake me now?"

She leaned forward in her chair, and clasped her slender hands as she made her appeal. I took her poor, helpless hands in mine and asked: "Do you know anything of your family? Have you any living relations?"

She shook her head sadly as she replied: "I have only a dim recollection of my childhood, dim and indistinct, like some far off object on a misty morning. I can gather the image of my mother as she taught me to pray, taught me to have faith in a loving Savior. There is not left in my memory the faintest recollection of my father, but there comes to me at times, as vague as a dream, the remembrance of a brother. But there was a dark spot, away back in my life, out of which I can get nothing but low voices, hurried steps, confusion, which ended in my present surroundings. Oh! I will bless you with my last breath, if you will only let me go away from here. I am slowly perishing from the restraints under which I am placed."

I can not describe to you the sadness with which this was said, nor can I paint her piteous, pleading eyes. My heart sank within me as I thought of my promise to her, and the strict laws of the convent, through which I must break in order to gratify her wish. She wanted liberty, and whoever heard of a convent willingly unbarring its doors, that one of its inmates might pass out into the great world. I told Sister Angelica that I would still be her friend, but, in order to be of assistance to her, I must have time to study her case, and to mature a plan of action.

She only said, as I took my departure: "I trust you, as I have never trusted any other human being. I believe if you would betray me to the Superior, after having sought my confidence, the result would kill me."

Now, my dear sister, I need, so much, your advice and your help. I feel such a strange interest in this woman, I work sedulously at my regular duties, I try to lose myself in study, I ride out on the beautiful Hudson, and drink in its glorious scenery, but I escape not. She is ever present with me; I am restless and dissatisfied when absent from her, and in her presence I find a satisfaction different from everything I have experienced in my previous life.

I wonder if this is love. I shudder, as I ask the question. Love! and a priest in the Catholic Church! Oh! away, away with such a thought. I can not be recreant to the vows of my order. And yet I can not desert this woman. She must have help; but how? and when?

Write to me soon, for I have such a burden on my heart. Your letters will be a cheer and a strength to me. I send you much brotherly love, and impatiently await your reply.

Affectionately,

LOUIS LANGFORD.

CHAPTER XV.

THE CONFIDENCE INTERRUPTED.

It was late in October that Mrs. Livingston appointed to have an evening party. Possibly Father Neigler had much to do with the selection of the time and the naming of the guests. The Madam was radiant in the character of hostess. Her curls were arranged more bewitchingly than ever, and her nose appeared less charmingly inquisitive.

Earnest and Gerould were among the number invited. The latter was in ecstasies over the prospect of seeing Miss Langford, although it had not been three evenings since he visited her. In truth, he had been a most regular visitor at the Madam's house from the time of his first meeting with Marabel. His attention was annoying to the Madam, and she said as much to Miss Langford. But that young lady seemed to be of the opinion that her own judgment was as good as that of her hostess. At all events, Gerould Wingrove's visits were not less frequent nor his attentions less marked.

Reticence was not a characteristic of Gerould. He was a remarkably communicative young man. He had often said to Earnest, during the last month, that Miss Langford was an angel, and that he

dearly loved angels. The conversation always grew upon him, and he became more free and confidential. He said on this occasion, in a low tone with a deal of earnestness in it, that he was fully convinced that Marabel admired him. He was free to admit that she was yet a little shy, "but then you know," he added, "we have been acquainted but a short time. Her shyness will wear away. I would not want her to be too easily won, but I am certain the outcome will be all right. I have made up my mind, I am going to marry Marabel Langford. Now, honestly, old boy, don't you think her a charming creature and me a lucky chicken?" And Gerould stopped blacking his boot and cast a questioning glance at Earnest, who was quietly sitting some distance away, looking more solemn than the subject seemed to demand.

There came a smile to Earnest's lips, half sarcasm and half pity, as he replied: "I suppose Miss Langford has unmistakably signified her willingness to accept you as a suitor, from the confident tone in which you speak?"

"Oh, no, not so fast, old fellow. You are too everlastingly exacting in your questions. You don't suppose now that Miss Langford is going to say yes before I ask her? Not much she won't. But I think she will be ready by the time I get my courage up to the test-point. She is just one of the finest girls in all creation. She is as sweet as a concentrated sugar plantation." And Gerould smacked his lips and gesticulated violently with his blacking-brush.

“Gerould,” Earnest began with great deliberation, “I do not believe Miss Langford is a flirt, and if she has given you encouragement she means it. But I think you are mistaken in the opinion that she has encouraged you.”

“Or, in other words, my worthy chum, you mean to intimate that Gerould Wingrove is such a conceited goose that he fancies a woman in love with him when she is wholly indifferent. I tell you she is not indifferent, but is most attentive and kind.”

“Yes, she might be attentive and kind to her poodle,” said Earnest with his provoking smile.

“I have a great notion to destroy the beauty of your countenance with this blacking-brush, in compensation for your impudence,” cried Gerould. “But, by the way, when I last called on Miss Langford, she made inquiry about you.” And he watched the face of his companion narrowly as he concluded this remark.

Earnest colored slightly, and asked with some eagerness: “What did she say?”

“Humph, let me see; I believe you came from New York.”

“Yes,” rather impatiently.

“Miss Langford has a brother there.”

“Is that what she said?”

“Hardly, I think.”

“Will you be so good as to tell me?”

“It has been some time since you called?”

“I have been there only once, some three weeks since.”

“Well, I scarcely remember what she did say. It was nothing very definite. The impression on my mind is that she remarked something about her brother’s being an old acquaintance of yours, and for that reason she would like very much to see you. No desire for your presence on your personal merits, my dear fellow, but wholly on account of a probable association with her brother.” Gerould critically scrutinized his appearance in a large mirror, and carefully removed the almost invisible specks that were clinging to his broadcloth coat.

“An acquaintance with her brother!” exclaimed Earnest, starting up in his surprise, but almost immediately checking himself.

“Pshaw, old boy, don’t get excited about it. There is nothing like preserving a perfect equilibrium. Now I may be altogether mistaken, you know. How in the name of humanity can any one be expected to remember everything that so dazzling a creature says. I know she was speaking of yourself and her brother at the same time, but possibly the acquaintance is the fruit of my fertile brain. Don’t let it turn you topsy turvy till you are sure I am right. I will ask her about it again to-night, and will take the precaution to make a note of her answer. But it is high time we were off. I wouldn’t be too late for a Chinese Curiosity Shop.”

“You are a provoking fellow, Gerould,” said Earnest as he took his friend’s arm and walked out into the street, “but I do not think you will ever be

a lunatic, so spare yourself all uneasiness on that subject."

"Not brains enough, hey? I shall have to give you a lesson, my dear sir, in good manners. But in the meantime I will interrogate Miss Langford for your satisfaction and my special enjoyment."

"Suppose, Gerould, you say nothing to Miss Langford of this matter, but leave it to me to broach in any manner that I deem best."

"All right, all right. It is possibly best that you should have some subject in common between you, since you do not like each other very well. Oh! I don't mean just that. But then you are shy of her because she is such a strong Catholic, and she is equally wary of you because you are such a staunch Protestant. I am neither the one nor the other, as I used to be, but a jolly go-between. But here is the house that is illuminated by the charming presence of the subject of our conversation."

The young gentlemen were ushered into the drawing-room, and were graciously received by the Madam. We will leave them there for a few moments, enjoying themselves in the usual way, while we pay our respects to another character.

About a week before the evening of the party, Marabel had received her brother's letter. The inexplicable interest which she had felt in Earnest was deepened by the reception of this epistle. She was conscious of a very strong desire to have a conversation with him, without being equally conscious of what she wished to say. In truth,

during the last week she had thought very much about Earnest, entirely too much for a lady who entertained her religious antipathies. Of course she attributed all this to the news she had received from her brother, and was slowly forgetting the fact that she was in a disturbed state some weeks before he wrote. But such is the consistency of human nature, at least some phases of it.

Indeed, Marabel had already determined that the interest which she felt in Earnest was prompted by the gratitude she entertained for the memory of his father. Had she consulted Mr. Wingrove, he, possibly, would have been of the same opinion, provided she had given him all the facts.

In the morning of the day on which the party occurred, she received a brief note from her brother, which requested her to say nothing to Mr. Leighton concerning the revelations contained in his recent letter. This was a perplexity. She had already thought of much which she wished to say, and besides she had given Mr. Wingrove a hint for the purpose of arousing Earnest, and she thought now, in all probability, that the subject might be beyond her control. The real question was, how to have a conversation with Earnest without touching the forbidden theme, provided an effort should be made to introduce it. She descended to the drawing-room with the vain regret that she had ever alluded to the subject. Many a woman has carried with her a like regret.

Whatever else may be said of the Madam, she

generally contrived to have pleasurable parties. The one on this occasion was, as usual, enjoyable. Mr. Wingrove, especially, seemed to be in the highest spirits. He adroitly managed to monopolize nearly all the time of Marabel. He sang with her, he promenaded with her, then while she rested, he sat on the divan and chatted with her. And he did this with so much address that it really was not a subject of criticism, even if the young lady were just the least annoyed.

It was late in the evening that Earnest walked into the neat little library of the Madam. On one side of this room was a small alcove, separated from the main apartment by heavy damask curtains. It was such a charming, quiet nook that Earnest at once took possession, escaping thereby the noisy crowd. He moved a chair close to the window, and opening the blind, seated himself where it partly shielded him, while he gazed out into the silent night. The full moon of October was tinging with silver the frost-brown leaves, and was carpeting the earth with its varied colors of light and shadow.

He soon fell into a reverie, and in slow procession the events of his past life were moving before him. But he was suddenly interrupted by the sound of a light and hasty step, and before he could change his position, Marabel Langford glided into the quiet alcove. She was almost touching him before he arrested her attention ; then the waves of color swept over her face and neck as she said, with a charming mixture of pique and embarrassment :

“I hope Mr. Leighton will excuse me. I was momentarily weary of company, and thought to make a brief escape, but scarcely expected that one of our visitors had forestalled me in this pleasant retreat. But when Mr. Leighton has granted my pardon, I shall leave him to the happy solitude of his own meditations.”

There was a delightful imperiousness about her as she concluded her remark, and Earnest thought he had never seen a woman so queenly.

He replied: “If Miss Langford’s stay is conditioned on my act of clemency, I shall postpone that pleasure for a season. Indeed, I consider it a good providence that she broke up my meditation, as I very much wish a brief conversation with her,” and Earnest moved another chair near the window.

As Marabel took her seat a troubled look came into her face, but it vanished as she replied with one of her attractive smiles: “I appreciate the gallantry that attributes my blunder to a good providence, but I was really anxious to escape too much attention in the drawing-room,” and then she added archly, “even if that attention were very pleasant under ordinary circumstances.”

There was a mischievous sparkle in the eyes of Earnest, as he remarked: “I shall not tell you how many plans I have laid this evening to capture Miss Langford from the gentleman who was so attentive, but his tenacity was equal to every emergency.”

“You will recognize the superiority of woman’s

tact, when you remember how easily I captured you without intending to do so."

"And I feel very grateful for the mistake, as I wish to ask you some questions concerning your brother in New York."

At a venture, Marabel replied: "Perhaps I may be unwilling to communicate facts in family history, Mr. Leighton."

"I beg your pardon then," rejoined Earnest, "as I do not wish to press an unpleasant question; but as you made mention of the subject to Gerould Wingrove, I thought it would be proper for me to pursue it farther, since it has a deep interest to me."

Marabel Langford gazed into the large, earnest eyes before her, then thought of her brother's note for a moment, and finally determined, at whatever hazard to herself, she would give him this audience. So she replied: "It is possible that I know something that may be beneficial to you, Mr. Leighton. Let me know your wish, and I promise you a frank reply."

After a thoughtful pause, Earnest stated briefly the facts connected with his imprisonment and escape. In Marabel, he had a most attentive listener; at times her large blue eyes would fill with tears, and then again would show the indignation which she felt. Earnest was most careful and exact in the description of his deliverer, and he closed with the question: "Was not that young priest your brother, Miss Langford?"

Marabel had leaned over toward Earnest, and

her face was full of eagerness, and a strange wistful look was in her eyes. She opened her lips to reply, but her voice was drowned by a much louder tone, which exclaimed: "Heigho, I've found the truants! What a delightful little nook in which to talk secrets!"

On glancing up they saw the laughing face of Gerould Wingrove.

CHAPTER XVI.

SISTER ANGELICA.

Mother Byxbee was the Superior of the Convent of St. Mary. She was a large woman, with light complexion and round face, and with not altogether a bad disposition, for a Superior of a convent. She indeed possessed some good qualities, but an insatiate desire to pry into other people's affairs made her obnoxious to persons of discriminating tastes. The rigid rules of her order, alone, kept her from being a great gossip. But, as it was, she wandered through her limited dominion with her inquisitive eyes wide open, and her itching ears trained to hear the lowest sound.

The Mother Superior was not a wicked woman. She possessed, at least, the remnant of a heart. But she profoundly believed in the Catholic Church, and in the imperative necessity of every one's becoming a member of it in order to salvation. She would be cruel sometimes, then, for the soul's sake, but was always praying for her own sake. Under her administration the Convent of St. Mary had not witnessed many cases of severe discipline, and even the worst of these had been instigated by an unfeeling priesthood. She was always solicitous for the conversion of every heretic that was

placed under her charge, but she generally preferred the mild agencies of persuasion to the severe measures of limited food in a dark cell.

Her experience with Sister Angelica had been most unsatisfactory, and as a *dernier resort* she had placed her in the hands of Father Louis in the hope that priestly cunning might accomplish more than womanly tact ; but, true to the deepest instincts of her nature, she kept them under the most constant surveillance. One interview between Father Louis and Sister Angelica has already been referred to, and several others had followed since that time. During all these conversations Mother Byxbee had occupied an unobserved but convenient position, where she could note every movement and expression of the interested actors, although she failed to catch the words which they spoke.

To her interested eye, the whole scene was a most exciting pantomime, and she became convinced, at last, that those two young people were deeply concerned about each other. When Father Louis was talking to Sister Angelica, a light would come into his handsome face, and a tenderness into his splendid eyes, that registered a deeper feeling than the simple desire to proselyte a young woman.

It was several weeks before she made this discovery, but having made it she knew that this wayward sister could be no longer trusted to the spiritual guidance of the assistant confessor. She felt there would be sad hearts, and she sympathized with them, for away back in her own life there had

been a tender period full of low tones and fragrant flowers. In thinking over these happy days, which she had buried in a single grave, the stern Superior slowly gave place to the true woman. But this human weariness lasted but a moment. The footsteps of Father Louis had scarcely died in the distance as he left the Convent, till the Superior was locked in her own room maturing plans to overreach her own confessor.

It was on the following day that Father Mallory received an urgent request from Mother Byxbee to visit the Convent immediately, as she wished to advise with him on most important business. This was delightful news to the epicure priest, for he was sure of a dainty dinner in the choice little parlor of the Superior. With as little delay as possible he repaired to the Convent, where he found the Superior alone, and a small table covered with all those delicacies that were calculated to tempt the appetite of a priest. Father Mallory spent a considerable time in testing the various dishes before him, and complimenting his hostess in the most agreeable manner; but finally having finished both these pleasant duties, he moved his chair away from the table, and very near the Superior, as he remarked:

“Mother Byxbee has attained perfection in the art of making a visitor feel entirely at his ease, and of putting him in the very best frame of mind to discharge any difficult duty. I shall be really happy now if I can be of some assistance to her in

order to show my high appreciation of her courtly entertainment." This was said with more ceremony than generally characterized Father Mallory, but his little black eyes were full of their hidden cunning.

The Superior began slowly: "I wish to state a hypothetical case to you, Father Mallory, one that I do not say has ever occurred or ever will happen. Then I want your solution of the case;" and she watch him closely, but failed to get the expression of his eye as he curtly rejoined: "Proceed; I understand."

"Suppose that in my experience as Superior of this Convent I should have a Protestant girl placed under my charge, and after my best endeavor she still remains a Protestant, although she has been with me long enough to have reached womanhood. And in my extremity—"

"But you *ought* to convert her," interrupted the priest, impatiently. "The church at least expects that much of you."

The Superior drew herself up proudly and said in a curt tone: "The impatience of Father Mallory is scarcely warranted when he remembers I am stating an hypothesis."

"Oh! go on, then," exclaimed the priest, wincing a little under the Superior's reply.

"Well, assume I failed and needed help, and that I called into my assistance the confessor of the Convent—"

"A most proper person," interpolated the priest,

“And,” continued Mother Byxbee, “suppose I should suspect from close observation, that this said confessor was in love with the lady, and was plotting—”

“Thunderation!” exclaimed Mallory, all excitement, “such a thing is impossible.”

“I wish you would let me finish before you interrupt me,” rejoined the Superior. “This is necessary to the case which I wish to make out. Remember, I believe my two characters love each other and that instead of trying to convert the lady, the priest is plotting her escape. Now under such circumstances, what should be done?”

The merciless light was burning in Mallory’s eyes as he answered sententiously: “First make sure that your belief is right, then punish both culprits.”

But *I* can not punish a priest.”

“*I* can!” came fiercely from Mallory’s lips.

“But suppose I did not wish to punish them?” inquired the Superior.

“You have no choice in the matter. A priest that has so far outraged his profession as the one you have described must suffer the penalty of his crime.”

Mallory arose and paced the floor a few moments in silence, then he came and stood in front of the Superior, placing upon her his sharp black eyes and shaking his short fat finger at her, said in a threatening tone:

“I have my suspicions in regard to your hypothet-

ical case, and I demand of you, by all the authority of my position, to know if the case is not a real one."

The Superior saw in an instant that the priest was excited and determined, and she cautiously asked:

"Do you suppose I could have any motive in trying to deceive you?"

"I suppose nothing as regards your motives," said Mallory, harshly, "but I believe Louis Langford, whom I placed here as assistant confessor, is the priest to whom you refer. I will know the truth either by fair means or foul. If you wish to shield either party you would better conciliate me by giving the desired information. I have shown the last act of mercy to this Father Louis, and with anything that concerns him I am as relentless as death."

In his rage the angry priest stamped his foot, and the baleful light from his wicked eyes spread all over his face. He was a desperate man, and the woman felt that she had aroused a lion in her path.

There was a painful pause for several moments, and the Superior could hear the beating of her own heart. She was in a desperate strait. The necessities of her situation seemed to compel her to sacrifice Louis Langford, or to incur the greater risk of involving Sister Angelica in a common ruin with him. She knew the delicate girl could not stand, a single month, the harsh treatment of Father Mallory. In her extremity she made a feeble effort to gain time by remarking:

"If Father Mallory will call again to-morrow, I will lay the whole matter before him in detail. I feel it to be my duty to follow his advice."

A sinister smile was on the lips of the priest as he replied: "Your request is a confession that my surmise is correct, ha! ha! but won't I make that young scapegrace of a priest smart? A priest, indeed! He has been putting on too many airs already for my use, and I think he is about at his rope's end now. I always said, give him rope and he would hang himself."

He walked to and fro across the room, rubbing his hands together in savage satisfaction. But he suddenly turned on the Superior and demanded in sharpest voice: "Who is the woman? Your safety lies in telling me everything."

She hesitated no longer, but endeavored to make the best terms with the heartless man."

"I will tell you all," she said, provided you promise me upon your honor as a priest that the woman shall suffer nothing from your hand."

"I make that promise on the condition that you afford me an opportunity of overhearing a conversation between them, so that my proof may be conclusive."

This was a hard condition, and again she hesitated.

Mallory added with a sneer: "I warn you again that you would better accept my terms without so much dallying."

"I consent," she said reluctantly.

“One other condition,” said the priest, and again his eyes were emitting their peculiar light; “you must swear to me that you will not give to them a single word of warning. If you do may all the anathemas of heaven and earth come upon your head. I repeat, may you be a thousand times accursed, if you dare to breathe a single hint.”

The fury of the man overawed the woman, and in a trembling voice she said: “I promise, oh, I promise, but do not make such awful threats.”

* * * * *

Two days after this scene Louis Langford had made arrangements to have another conversation with Sister Angelica. His visits had become very frequent. A better acquaintance with the unfortunate young lady had greatly intensified his interest.

Sister Angelica, herself, was very much improved. Her step was more buoyant, a richer color was in her face and a brighter light in her eye. Hope is a wonderful tonic, and, for the first time since she could remember, she had hope. Louis Langford was the only Catholic official that had not betrayed her. She had faith in him, and all unconsciously extended that faith to others. She believed the world to be much better because she believed him to be good.

But hope can not supplant the hectic flush. Hope can not stay, permanently, the flow of blood from lung to lip. But it did all that it could do—it made a dark pathway brighter—it sheeted, in purple and gold, a black cloud that had been for years slowly rising in a fair young life.

This was the first promise of happiness ever enjoyed by Sister Angelica. It was unspeakably sweet. She had a foretaste of love ere the words of love had been spoken. She was dreaming of freedom before the prison bars had been broken. All this delight was filling her soul because she had found one man in whom she could trust.

Poor woman ! for the moment she had forgotten the awful monster that held her with its giant strength. She overrated the ability of a single man to cope with a church that was almost omnipresent. It was a fair, beautiful bird, beating its wings in vain, while held by the deathless eye of its charmer.

While Sister Angelica was really happier than she had ever been, Father Louis, on the other hand, was a painful contradiction. There were moments with him in which the joy of a life seemed compressed, but these were sure to be followed by a feeling wholly opposite, and indescribably bitter. As a man, he felt all the delicious pleasures of loving a pure woman : as a sincere priest, he experienced all the tortures of an outraged conscience incident to such a human weakness.

Louis Langford was occupying a strange attitude. The doctrines and morals of his church, which had been with him a constant study, were being weighed in the balance against the simple intuitions of right. But there was one question which presented itself to his sensitive nature that was full of gall and bitterness. Had he the right, as a Catholic priest, to assist Sister Angelica in escaping from her

imprisonment? He always staggered over this question ; it was the mother of sleepless nights and brooding days.

This was the problem which he studied for many weeks. Looking at it from one angle of vision, it seemed wonderously like treachery ; while from a different stand-point, it had the appearance of an unselfish act of humanity. He decided, at once, that it was inconsistent with his priestly office to love any woman. Of course, then, he would crucify every tender feeling that was in his heart for Sister Angelica.

He wished to talk to her about the plans he had matured under the pressure of this feeling. Hence the present visit.

When he had gone to the convent before, Sister Angelica had always received him in the same apartment, but on this occasion he was ushered into a small room singularly finished off with panel work. The entire appearance of this little parlor impressed him as being peculiar. There was not an ornament in it. A rich brussels carpet covered the room, and two upholstered arm-chairs were fastened to the floor on opposite sides of the apartment. Father Louis tapped on the paneling and discovered that it was very thin. There was no other door visible except the one through which he had come.

His study of the room was interrupted by the entrance of Sister Angelica. She was dressed in white and wore no ornament save a red rose at her

throat. But her dress was not whiter than her face, if we may except the crimson spots that rested on either cheek, like the watchful sentinels of the army of death.

She moved forward gracefully to where Louis Langford stood, and gave him her hand in salutation. He held that delicate hand for one moment in his warm clasp. Had he done otherwise he would have been less than human. As she withdrew it the rich blood came to her cheeks and her lips trembled. She had her color again.

There was an awkward pause. Under such circumstances the pauses are always awkward.

She was the first to recover herself—women always are—and she said, half playfully: “There are two stationary seats, which will you select?” But even as she spoke jestingly a shadow was gathering on her face.

Louis Langford looked at the chairs, and then remarked: “Being entirely unacquainted with these seats, I am not in a fit condition to make a choice. I wave my right in favor of Sister Angelica.”

“I must also plead ignorance,” she said, with a light laugh, as she took the chair nearest her; “but, to be frank with you, I was never in this room before. As long as I have resided in the convent, I was not aware that such a room was in existence. Possibly there are many other apartments of which I know nothing.”

This sentence was concluded with a sigh, which clearly marked an uneasy feeling. A sudden rest-

lessness had stolen into these hearts that were glad to meet each other. For a time they sat there silently, entirely unconscious of their attitude. They were listening—listening for—they knew not what.

It is painful to have an undefinable sense of danger creeping over you. One can not feel altogether easy when the very atmosphere that one breathes seems to hold a threat.

These two young people were aware that they were incurring a fearful risk when they endeavored to open the gates of the Convent against the wishes of the church. But it was to one of them the price of life and liberty. To the other it became a high duty prompted by the noble inspiration of a lofty chivalry.

Nevertheless, it requires brave hearts to face an unseen danger. There is something heroic in a body of soldiers moving forward in steady column, under the conviction that a masked battery may open upon them at any moment. Those are peerless spirits that will press on in a hazardous enterprise against the chilling consciousness, that detection is already an accomplished fact.

The silence was broken at last by Louis Langford asking: "Did the Superior give any reason for assigning this room as the place of our meeting?"

"None," is the reply. Then is added: "Father Louis is aware that neither priests nor Superiors generally assign any reason for their actions. They command, we obey."

“But Superiors do not command priests,” he said. “And I feel almost positive in the conviction that Mother Byxbee never, of her own accord, sent us to this room. There is some other power behind her throne. I think—”

Here he paused and met the questioning gaze of his companion. There was a slight movement beyond the paneling that attracted the attention of both. It sounded as if some one had grown tired of one position and had changed his attitude.

This was suspicious. The problem of their fears was now solved. They were confident that the pious system of eaves-dropping was being practiced upon them. The face of Louis Langford darkened and his lips were firmly set.

Involuntarily he took hold of his chair to move it nearer Sister Angelica, whose face wore a pained and troubled expression. He smiled bitterly as he was reminded of the fixed nature of his chair, and remarked: “In keeping with all the rest.”

He quietly took from his pocket his note book, and on a blank leaf wrote the following, which he tore out and handed to Sister Angelica:

“Father Mallory is my deadly enemy. He is constantly planning my ruin. I am sure it is he who is having us watched to-day. To state to you my plans for your escape would be to place both of us at his mercy, which is the cruelest punishment. Our programme must be changed, but be assured I will not forsake you.”

While writing this note Louis Langford had kept

up a constant conversation. He paused a moment to allow time for Sister Angelica to read it. She was satisfied in her own mind that they were beset by the eager minions of the church, and that their safety was only to be found in the greatest prudence.

Father Louis said, with a deal of seriousness in his voice which was not at all affected, for he was oppressed by his surrounding circumstances: "I think Sister Angelica, that you ought to come into the communion of our holy church. I have been patient in my labor to teach you its sublime doctrines. She will be to you a blessed mother, affording you consolation and hope. Are there any other objections in your mind too serious to be surmounted?"

The answer came in tones plaintively sad. It was the speaking of a heart that was gradually losing its hold on hope. The thought of freedom that had been sustaining this frail young creature was giving way before the thought of dark and merciless imprisonment. She answered sadly then:

"There are many things about the Catholic Church that it seems impossible for me to accept. God has said: 'Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them.' Your church, Father Louis, is full of idols, full of images. And before these images Catholics are

constantly bowing. How can you do it when God has spoken so plainly?"

The wistfulness of those large pleading eyes cut Louis Langford like a knife. He endured the pain that a man only feels when a loved one is suffering, and he is powerless to render assistance. But he replied to her question :

"We only use those images as helps to our worship. We do not adore them. They assist in leading the mind up to God, whom we reverence and love."

"And yet the history of your church furnishes abundant evidence that the mass of your membership have believed that these relics and images possessed a supernatural power—could heal diseases and relieve the sick."

"There is a large number of people who can only be reached by placing something material before them as an aid to their spiritual conceptions. You must confess that we have reached this class much more efficiently than any of the so-called churches around us. 'The end justifies the means,' you know, is an old maxim of our church."

"Yes, and a most pernicious one. I could justify any horror by such a maxim. God says concerning images : 'Thou shalt *not bow* thyself down to them,' and your church says through her priests : 'Bow thyself down, for that is our way of reaching you.' For shame, Father Louis ! and to think, too, that you wish to convert me, to such a doctrine."

"But I insist that we do not use images in the

sense to which God referred. We do not worship them, and they in no way rival Him.”

“The Bible says, use them not, and I believe and accept the Bible. Its language is plain and its meaning clear. And besides, I could never consent to go to any man and open my heart to him as if he were God. I abhor every thing about the confessional. I should forever loathe myself, if I should sit and listen to some questions asked by men who claim to be vicegerents of God. Father Louis, I think you one of the most sincere and honest of men, and I plead with you to tell me frankly, do you believe in the confessional? Do you not know that it is full of dark crimes and dangerous secrets? Tell me truly, do you not away down in your soul of souls abhor it?”

Sister Angelica leaned forward in her intense earnestness, and her white tapering fingers twined nervously around each other. Her breath came quick and short, and her brow would suddenly knit as if she were keenly suffering.

As Louis Langford gazed on the frail, but beautiful creature before him, he could but recall the solemn and earnest protest of his sister against the confessional, on the eve of her departure from New York. He was not unconscious that the two women who were so dear to him, dearer than his own life, utterly detested this sacrament of the church.

He crossed the room to Sister Angelica, took her slender hand in his own, and in his peculiarly rich, deep tones, said :

“If I answer your question frankly and honestly, I can not say that I fully believe in the confessional. But over this point I have suffered untold anguish, for if I yield this, I yield Catholicism. It is an awful struggle and your tender heart ought to pity me.”

“I do pity you! I do,” came quivering from her lips. “I know the danger you are in, and how I wish I could help you.”

Father Louis gave a sudden start, then, lowering his voice, said: “We have spoken too loud. I fear we have been overheard. If so, it may prove fatal to us.”

Then, after a pause, he added: “I feel that we are environed by danger, but I am resolved to save you, or die in the attempt.”

At that instant, an unseen door was hurled open, and Father Mallory, with three other men, stood in their presence. Father Louis dropped Sister Angelica’s hand, as Mallory sneeringly hissed: “You will die, my young chicken, you will never save her.”

A proud and defiant smile came to Louis Langford’s face, as with a flashing eye, he placed himself between Sister Angelica and the four intruders.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE ESCAPE.

Mallory's face was distorted with rage when he saw this act of the young man.

"Ho, ho ! he snarled," you are going to play the heroic, are you? Why, my villainous young fox, you are a bigger fool than I thought you were. We have trapped you this time, and there is not a shadow of a chance for you to escape."

He leered at Louis as if he enjoyed the scene with his whole heart. The sudden entrance of these men and the savage demeanor of Mallory had frightened Sister Angelica. She shrank back with a cowed and despairing look in her face. But Louis Langford stood erect, with his right hand thrust into his bosom and a defiant smile on his lips. He carried himself more like a soldier than a priest.

"You are a fine looking wretch," sneered Mallory.

To this there was no reply.

He continued: "We have overheard your treachery, and the proof is conclusive against you. You are a villain and a renegade, and we shall arrest you. Will you quietly surrender, or shall we take you like a dog?"

"I shall neither surrender nor be taken," said Louis, in a calm tone.

"Thunderation!" yelled the priest. "Neither surrender nor be taken! Listen at the audacious rascal will you! I tell you, my young cub, we will give you a lesson that you will never forget. Seize him, boys, and bind him hand and foot."

The men started forward to obey this command. Sister Angelica gave a little shriek which ended with the fruitless petition to spare him. Then she sank into one of the chairs, covered her face with her hands, and trembled like a leaf.

In an instant the whole scene was changed, and an expression of surprise and dismay was on the faces of the advancing men. Father Mallory was looking down the cold barrel of a pistol, and the men paused.

"Another step and your leader is a dead man," from Louis.

Neither the voice nor the hand trembled.

Mallory muttered: "The devil."

He saw there a man who was both brave and cool, and he quailed before the fierce eye that guided the steady hand. He had gathered his clan for the easy task of capturing a lamb, but behold, a lion was standing across his path. He was thrown off his guard and bewildered, as he gazed helplessly into the gleaming barrel that pointed straight at his face.

Louis spoke bitterly: "Father Mallory, you would not let me be a true priest, you have har-

rassed me, you have hunted me down, you have tried to make me a criminal. Through your influence I was deceived into becoming a priest, but I had resolved to discharge with fidelity my oath. This small consolation was not allowed me. I must either submit to persecution or sear my conscience with the fires which are ignited by infamous acts. I chose to do right, and for that choice I have suffered. Know now that there are some practices to which you can not drive me, aye, more, I forever renounce your authority. I do not wish to stain my hands in blood, but I tell you now, beware how you cross my path in future."

He turned his head toward Sister Angelica, and asked: "Will you escape with me?"

She sprang to her feet, all of a tremor, as she gasped the single word: "Yes."

"Come then."

They walked to the door, and the four men looked on in silence. Louis paused at the door and said:

"If any man interferes with my escape, I shall kill him." Then the door was closed and locked.

"Follow me without a word—trust every thing to my guidance—keep perfectly calm—and we will clear the convent."

This to Sister Angelica, who replied: "I will, and may God bless you."

They passed through a large room into a smaller one, then out into a long hall, at the further end of which was the front door. They passed down the hall rapidly and silently.

“Would you please open the door?” asked Louis politely of a nun who was standing there counting her beads.

She recognized the speaker, and, without a word, complied with his request. But a startled look came into her face, when Louis stepped aside to allow Sister Angelica first to go out. As he was a privileged person in the convent, she asked no questions.

They passed out into the world and the convent walls were behind them. There was a wild bound at Sister Angelica's heart, an impulsive throb of delight. Long days and nights that had painfully and slowly crept up into months and years were lying behind her, and freedom and the world were her possession now. The throbbings of joy were chilled somewhat by the cold, strange aspect of everything about her.

But what should they do? this was the question that was forcing itself on Louis' attention. He knew too well the kind of characters with which he had to deal. He had little time to think; he must act and act at once.

They walked down the street as rapidly as they could, considering the feeble condition of Sister Angelica. The excitement gave her unusual strength, and she moved with a remarkable degree of vigor. But she was bare-headed and without wrappings, and the day was too cold for this, even if she were stronger. Louis noticed her trembling and thought her frightened.

“Do not be alarmed,” he said kindly.

“I am not—with you as a protector,” she replied, and gave him a look of gratitude that was his full reward.

“But you are trembling.”

“A little chilly, only.”

For the first time he noticed her exposed condition, and he said, in self-reproach: “How careless in me not to observe that you had no wrappings. We must remedy this at once.”

At the next store he purchased a heavy shawl and hood. These were enough to keep the delicate girl comfortable.

When Louis and Angelica walked out of the room at the convent, they left a bewildered group behind them. But Mallory recovered himself and exclaimed, with an air of doubt, most uncommon with him:

“The fool will surely not try to take her from the convent!”

He reflected a moment, and then continued: “Yes, he will. He is desperate and will do anything.”

A bitter smile was on his lips, and the fire of his fierce passion was burning in his little eyes.

“Curse him, I’ll beat him yet,” he muttered between his set teeth.

Then he spoke in a low tone to one of the group. This was Billy Golyn, nature’s own detective. The man repeated his last words, and, nodding his head, shambled away.

As Louis came out of the store he saw a man dodge around the nearest corner. The movement was very quick and he caught a glimpse only of him. He was not sure that the man was trying to escape notice. But, as small as the incident seemed to be, it made him uneasy. What should he do?

They walked about a square, when Louis suddenly turned, and as he did, a figure vanished from sight. Bitterly he thought: "We are hunted." And slowly his courage took on the form of desperation, as he confronted the real difficulties that surrounded them.

Sister Angelica was not accustomed to walking, and she showed evident signs of fatigue. She uttered no word of complaint. But Louis noticed the tired and worn expression of her face, and her weary step. He gave her a tender look, a look of infinite longing to bear her away from all trouble to some quiet haven of rest. But his heart sank within him as he reflected that the storm now was at its darkest.

He called a passing carriage, and when they were seated in it, he said to the driver: "Straight ahead on this street till further orders." Then he watched the movements behind them.

A man shambled out from behind some obstruction on the side-walk and signaled a hack. A moment later the hack was following in the wake of the carriage, suiting its speed to the speed of the latter.

He changed his instructions to the driver, and

when they would turn a corner, he would look back, only to see the hack sweeping after them.

He had time to think now, and he thought rapidly. He was satisfied that they were pursued—hunted. He felt certain that the pursuit was by the order of Mallory, and that the priest was not acting without a settled purpose. A desperate hope only, remained of escaping. But blood hounds follow a track with fatal certainty and deadly speed.

They had been in the carriage near an hour, when he asked the driver: "How much do I owe you?"

"One dollar."

"Very well. When you turn the next corner, stop suddenly, let us out, and drive immediately away. Go on as you have been for another hour. Here is your pay." He handed him five dollars.

"You must be quick now."

The man smiled approvingly on the money and nodded assent to his instructions. When they turned the next corner, he drew his horses up with an abrupt jerk; Louis and Sister Angelica were out, and he was gone in a minute.

"Here, into this store," said Louis, as he hurried Sister Angelica out of sight.

They were none too soon, for immediately a hack dashed by with a single occupant—but that occupant had the eyes of a lynx. He was sitting with his hands on his knees, leaning slightly forward—watching.

The pursuer rushed on, and the pursued walked a few blocks, when they noticed a sign, on which

was painted, in large letters, the single word: Boarding.

“We must spend the remainder of to-day and to-night somewhere in the city; suppose we try here?” said Louis.

Sister Angelica assented and Louis rang the bell, and the door was opened by a servant. “I should like to see the lady of the house.”

“Will you take seats in the parlor till I call her?”

“Thank you.”

They were alone for a moment, and he looked on his companion with sadness and sympathy. Her face was as strangely beautiful as her form was fragile. The silent eloquence of long years of suffering was traced in every lineament of her countenance. No painter ever brought out the lines of patient endurance so skillfully as the bitter experiences of this girl had drawn them upon her fair young brow. There she sat with her mournful face and sad, expressive eyes.

“You are sorely wearied,” said Louis.

“Yes, but I am willing to be taxed to the utmost of my strength for the sake of liberty. Oh, do you think we can escape?” she asked impressively. Poor woman, her whole soul was in that question!

“I have an infinite faith in right,” he said. “If we do not escape now, we shall do so at some future time. Be of good cheer, my life shall protect yours.”

Again that wondrous look of gratitude caused his blood to surge in his veins, and glow in his cheeks.

“You have risked so much for me,” she began,

“poor worthless me, who have such a weak hold on life any way. The promises of the future are nothing ; what the world has to bestow, must be given in the present. But I fear all this risk will be unavailing ; I fear this anxiety to escape is the prelude to disappointment and cruel pain. The darkness seems so dense that we can not penetrate it. But I am the cause of all this effort, and if it were not for me you would have had no trouble. Now, you have made bitter enemies who hate you. If they should capture you, what would your punishment be?”

The pale face was flushed, and her eyes sparkled with unwonted excitement.

“Do not think of their capturing me,” he said, trying to avoid committing himself.

“But if they should capture you,” she insisted.

He smiled as he replied, “I should have, I suspect, to keep bachelor’s hall, in some dark cell on short rations.”

She knew what this meant, and she shuddered. Then, in tones of piteous entreaty : “I beseech you, escape. Alone, you can get away, but with such a burden as I, you will surely be caught. You have a long life before you of happiness and service, and I am only a broken reed, a wreck, standing on the verge of the tomb. Do not sacrifice yourself for me. The sacrifice is too great, the compensation is too small. Go, please go ! I plead with all my strength ; flee, before it is too late, my brave and generous preserver.”

She had come close to him, stood before him with clasped hands; tears were in her eyes and agony in her voice.

Louis trembled like an aspen. A tumult of emotion was surging and throbbing through every vein. He gazed into the fair face and delicate form before him, while words of impassionate love crowded to his lips. But he was her protector—and there was his priestly vow. The blood rushed from his face, and seemed to be gathering and freezing about his heart. With a mighty effort, he controlled himself and spoke calmly:

“Sister Angelica, you do not know, you can not know, what you say. Can you think me so mean as to desert you? I could never respect myself after so base a deed. I may be bound, hand and foot, and torn away from you, but of my own free will, I shall never forsake you, until you are in the full enjoyment of your liberty.”

“Oh, you are so good and brave,” she said, “but you are worth so much more than I am. Do go away and save yourself, and I shall never forget you, no never!”

He leaned toward her a little, with a strange light in his large, brown eyes, and said in an unsteady voice, and as if he were speaking to himself: “Never forget me, there is nothing that I would not face for such a boon as that—save dishonor.”

The intensity of his utterance brought the color to her cheek. He noticed this, and could have bitten off his tongue for his unguarded utterance. He was

stung by self-reproach and his face was crimson with shame.

But he stammered only : "I beg your pardon." The conversation was here interrupted by the entrance of a lady, who showed plainly her surprise at the attitude and excitement of her two visitors.

Louis stepped forward and handed the lady his card, and also introduced his companion as Sister Angelica. He was disconcerted and scarcely knew how to proceed, and as a result there was a moment of embarrassing silence.

The lady asked them to be seated, and turned to Sister Angelica with the remark :

"You look as if you were suffering."

"I am not well, thank you."

The lady said to Louis : "I believe sir, you wished to see me. May I ask your business?"

"We should like lodging for to-night."

"Do you live in the city?"

"Yes, ma'am."

There was silence for a moment. The lady appeared to be a little suspicious and was not sure what course was right, while Louis was at a loss what plea to advance. His life had been open and frank, and he was not gifted in double dealing. He felt that they occupied a questionable position, yet he feared the consequences of an explanation.

"Can you entertain us?" He said this at a venture, feeling that, at least, it would force a conclusion.

"I scarcely know what to say. You look like a priest, and this lady has surely been an inmate of

the convent. I have no right to ask an explanation, and I do not wish to be impertinent, but there is certainly something mysterious about your behavior. I have no desire to get myself into trouble by having my house the center of a sensation. This is suggested by my personal interest and is intended only as a precaution. I trust, sir, that you will not feel wounded at what I have said."

Louis replied: "Madam, we shall be frank with you and throw ourselves on your mercy. We should regret to bring any reproach on your house, or that we should become the central figures of a sensation. This lady has been the inmate of a convent, and its discipline is slowly but surely killing her. I wish to take her away to save her life. We have escaped thus far, but I can not leave the city without some further arrangements. We wish a retired place to stay the rest of the day and through the night. Early to-morrow we will go away. These are briefly the facts in the case. Will you turn this lady away, who comes to you sick and worn out seeking a night's shelter only?"

"I believe you, sir, and you both are welcome to all my house affords. I could not turn one away who shows so plainly the ravages of disease as this young lady."

"We thank you kindly," said Angelica, "and now would you be so kind as to show me my room that I may rest till tea?"

The lady assented.

"In the mean time," said Louis, "I will see to

some business that demands my attention this evening."

A look from Sister Angelica which plainly said: "I beseech you to be on your guard."

As Louis Langford went out, he paused a moment on the steps and looked carefully around, but saw no one. A small grocery was on the corner of the street diagonal across from where he stood, and a pair of eyes were peering through the window of that grocery. Their owner was hidden behind some boxes. A new light came into those sinister eyes as the young man paused on the doorsteps. And as Louis walked down the street, a nervous figure shambled out of the door and followed him.

Louis first went to the bank and drew some money. He kept his eyes well about him, but saw nothing to excite his suspicion. Then he went to a large furnishing establishment, and bought some articles that were evidently intended for a woman. As he left the store, he said reflectively: "These will sufficiently disguise her."

He went out of the store and looked carefully up and down the street. He saw nothing to awaken his distrust, but in reality a figure had just shambled into an alley. It was already growing late, and Louis started for the boarding-house where he had left Angelica. As he approached the locality, he became more cautious. He eyed every one. He went several blocks out of his way, and at last approached the house rapidly and entered with the

hope that he had been unobserved. He was ready now to leave the city at the first opportunity.

Five minutes after he had entered the house, a little scene was enacted in the grocery on the corner. One of the proprietors stepped behind a tier of boxes that was ranged along one side of the house. Behind these boxes a man was crouched. The proprietor looked at him suspiciously for a moment, and then thundered out:

“What the deuce are you doing here?”

“Doing here! only resting a bit,” the man said.

“Why, I’ve seen you skulking about here all day,” roared the proprietor.

“Skulking about all day. Oh, no.”

The proprietor said threateningly: “Now, let me tell you. I’ll call the police if you don’t move on in a hurry.”

“In a hurry! oh, yes, I’ll move on.” And a nervous figure shambled out of the door, dodged around the corner and was gone. The proprietor went on with his business, muttering something about dead-beats. But he was mistaken in the character of his visitor—he was not a dead-beat.

CHAPTER XVIII.

TROUBLE AGAIN.

Just before tea two men came to the same house where Louis had taken lodging, and asked if they could be accommodated with board. They came from Buffalo, so they said, and were carpenters by trade. These men were strangers in the city and were hunting work. As they had little baggage, they voluntarily proposed to pay their board in advance.

Physically speaking, they were large, rough men, and looked as if they might be as strong as oxen. They had not the best of faces, yet they were gentlemanly in appearance, told their story frankly, and were not at all suspicious in their actions. It was very common to have such applications for lodging. The lady said she would board them, and, with true business insight, accepted a week's payment in advance.

At supper they sat on the opposite side of the table from Louis, and talked incessantly about business—the probability of their getting into employment and the like. Louis ate in silence, and was deeply thoughtful. Once or twice he fancied those men were watching him furtively. But on second thought, he attributed this suspicion to his

nervous condition, especially as they appeared quite harmless. Sister Angelica complained of being too weary, and did not come down to supper.

When they were through eating, the two men went out—to look at the city, they said. They addressed each other familiarly by the names of Tom and Burke. They stopped on the street, near the door, and Tom said :

“That was the chap just across from us at the table.”

“Yes,” said Burke, “but where is the girl, you reckon?”

“She is around somewhere, but she is not our game,” and with this they moved away.

It was after 10 o'clock when they returned. There was a single jet of gas burning dimly in the lower hall. The other halls were dark. Louis Langford's room was on the second floor—the first door on reaching the landing. A light was still burning in his room. He had been maturing his plans for the next day—plans that were destined never to be carried out.

He was on the eve of retiring, when he heard steps in the hall, and then a light tap at his door. He opened it, and there stood the two workmen. Tom acted as spokesman :

“Hope you will excuse us for disturbing you, but we saw a light in your room and thought to ask you a few questions.”

While speaking, he quietly pushed himself into the room without an invitation from Louis who

had not opened the door very wide. Burke followed his companion in a manner equally insinuating.

"Good manners," thought Louis, but he accepted the situation, and asked them to take seats.

"Been living in the city long?" from Tom.

"I was born here."

"Ah!"

No remark from Louis on this exclamation. He was annoyed at this intrusion, and clearly showed it.

"Are you acquainted with many carpenters?"

"A few."

"How's that kind of business now?"

"Tolerably good, I should judge."

At this moment the following change of positions took place: Louis arose and stood with his back toward the fire, with his hands crossed behind him. Burke leaned on the mantel near Louis, but a little in rear of his position. Tom took from his pocket a large silk handkerchief and rubbed his nose.

"Should like to find work soon," from Tom.

The man at the mantel made a quick movement, seized Louis' hands, and held them with the grip of iron. In an instant his companion had one hand on the back of Louis' head, with a firm grip in his hair, while with the other he pressed the silk handkerchief against his mouth.

Louis made a desperate effort to free himself, but they held him like a vise. They no longer had the air of carpenters, but showed the skill of

experts. They were cool and determined. Louis soon saw that all his efforts were unavailing, and he quietly submitted to the inevitable. With a bitter pang, he thought of Sister Angelica.

"So you thought to skip out and leave us, did you, my covy?" said Tom. "Well, I should postpone my trip indefinitely, if I were in your place. 'Tis'nt kind to run off from old friends in any such way. Better be content to stay a little longer."

Louis made no reply for the simple reason that the capacity of the handkerchief prevented any such social effort. But soon a pair of hand-cuffs were slipped on his wrists, and a gag took the place of the handkerchief. Burke thrust his hand into his pocket and withdrew a small lantern, which he lighted and waived several times to and fro on the outside of the window. He then blew it out and again placed it in his pocket.

Tom adjusted a sling-shot to his wrist, and stepping in front of Louis, said :

"The first effort to attract attention will be followed by a blow from this," and he shook the shot in his face. "I think one lick will be enough. Be quiet and do as we bid you, and you shall not be hurt, but try to escape and you are a goner."

Burke took Louis by the arm, and Tom walked immediately behind him so as to strike him if he made the least resistance. The halls were empty and they passed quietly into the street. A light wagon was at the rear of the house, having come at the signal from the window. They all entered

this and drove away into the night. Louis knew his own situation was desperate, but he thought more of the helpless woman that he was leaving behind than of himself.

* * * * *

Early next morning a carriage drew up at the boarding-house, and the Superior of St. Mary's Convent rang at the door. When the bell was answered, she asked for Sister Angelica.

"Be seated in the parlor," said the lady, "and we will send for the person you wish to see."

"Will you not show me directly to her room?"

The lady hesitated a moment, but replied: "I should prefer that my boarders would receive their company in the parlor."

"Very well, Madam."

"Whom shall I announce?"

"Mother Byxbee of St. Mary's Convent."

Sister Angelica had just finished her toilet when her hostess entered.

"I fear I have bad news for you," said the lady.

"What?" in evident alarm.

"Mother Byxbee of St. Mary's Convent wishes to see you."

A deathly pallor overspread the face that for one brief night had something of hope in it. Sister Angelica clung to her chair for support, she was trembling so violently.

"I must see Father Louis," she gasped.

"Poor dear," said the lady compassionately, "I'll call him."

She went in search of Louis, and Angelica sank into a chair, with a strange, smothered feeling at her heart.

"My heart is breaking," she cried, as she pressed her hands to her side. "Oh, my Father, my Father, is there nothing but death for me!"

She swayed to and fro, like some tender flower, struggling against the storm. The landlady returned in consternation:

"His room is empty and we can not find him anywhere. His bed is untouched; he surely left early in the night." The lady talked excitedly.

Sister Angelica raised her head when the lady began speaking, but when she ceased to speak, a single word forced itself through her white lips: "Gone!" with an accent of infinite sadness.

The good heart of the lady was touched by this image of despair, and she seized Angelica's cold hands, and said, as tears ran down her cheeks: "Do not look that way. Do cheer up, some help will surely come."

The marble lips opened and breathed out: "Never."

"Oh, my dear, you are too good to suffer so. I'll do all I can for you, only keep up your spirits."

Here she was interrupted by a messenger from the Superior, who had grown impatient at the delay.

"What did she say, Lucy?" asked the lady of her maid.

"She said she must see the young lady at once."

The lady turned her eyes to Sister Angelica for an answer.

"I do not want to see her; oh, I wish I could run away from her sight forever," and again she broke down with her grief.

"Wait!" exclaimed the lady, and she walked resolutely out of the room and down into the parlor. There she confronted the Superior.

"The young lady does not wish an interview," she said, imploringly.

"But I must see her," coolly from the Superior.

"She has declined to come down."

"Will you allow me to go to her room?"

"I can not do so without her consent." The confident appearance of the Superior was having its effect on the lady.

"You are not aware, possibly, that she escaped from St. Mary's Convent. I have a legal right over her and can have her arrested. I should prefer to take her back quietly, but if compelled to, I will resort to force. Shall I call a policeman?"

This staggered the lady, for the Superior spoke in a firm but courteous tone. But she replied:

"I shall speak to the young lady."

Sister Angelica listened to her recital in a passive way, then she arose as if she had a burden heavier than she could bear.

"I thank you," she said, "for your kindness, but you can not help me now. I have never known one to escape from St. Mary's Convent—except to the grave. It will not be long till I find rest within

its shelter. Others besides me have had a taste of freedom, only to be dragged back to a more painful imprisonment. But I shall always remember that you were willing to help me, and that you spoke kindly to me. Good-bye, and may God bless you."

She held out her pale, thin hand, and the lady seized it, while the tears streamed down her cheeks. She sobbed: "Oh, my dear, how I wish I could help you."

The frail woman went to the parlor where she met her Superior. She bowed to her and said:

"I am ready, Mother Byxbee."

"Then we will go at once," is replied.

After one more tearful farewell to the stranger who had been so kind to her, Angelica entered the carriage, followed by the Superior. As they drove rapidly along the street, the Superior said:

"So you thought to run away from us did you?"

"Mother Byxbee, I was dying to get away from the confinement of that convent, and how could I resist an opportunity of escaping? My constitution is too shattered for me to be of any service to you. Please do not be too cruel to me."

"Oh, you merit kind treatment no doubt."

Sister Angelica started, and looked at the woman by her side. Then like the wail of a lost life, she cried:

"Is there no depth of human woe that can touch your sympathies? My poor body is tortured and my soul is crushed, and yet you can taunt me with bitter words. Oh, my God, my God." She

wrung her hands in this moment of her terrible grief.

The carriage rolled on through the great city, and presently drew up at the door of the convent. Angelica tottered up the steps—the same ones that she had come down so hopeful the day before. The Superior led her to a cell and she staggered across the threshold.

“We shall leave you by yourself for awhile,” the Superior said, “and see how you enjoy it.” Then she closed the door and locked it.

As we have seen, this woman was not altogether bad. But she prided herself on the discipline of her house, and she could scarcely forgive one who had tried to escape. On this day, she was in her cruelest mood, and a deed was to be done of which she should repent.

When the door closed, Angelica threw up her hands and cried :

“Alone, alone, all through these dark nights and days ! Oh, my Father, I can not bear it.”

She sank into a chair, her head dropped on the table, and the hard wood became crimson as the hemorrhage flowed from her lips.

CHAPTER XIX.

A CONNECTING LINK.

Earnest was not grateful to Gerould for interrupting his conversation with Marabel. She was on the eve of a revelation that he had long and earnestly wished. He was satisfied that the real pathos in his story had won her confidence, and then the opportunity for communicating all she wished was so favorable. That it should fail on account of Gerould, who had enjoyed Marabel's company all evening, was simply intolerable.

Earnest bit his lip and was silent. The color came and went in Marabel's face. She was evidently embarrassed. The quick eye of Gerould saw all this, and he was delighted, and, also, the least bit annoyed.

"Oh," he said, "I wish I were in Guinea. I have disturbed a most entertaining couple. I am remorseful—very; but it would look bad to run away now, though I long to flee from your sight. Besides, the Madam has commissioned me to bring Miss Langford to the piano, as there has been a general call for music. I beg a thousand pardons," to Earnest. "Will Miss Langford do me the honor to comply with the Madam's request?" and he offered his arm.

She accepted it coolly, and with a quiet excuse to Earnest, walked away with Gerould.

“I wish he was in Guinea, too,” ejaculated Earnest as he again looked out into the quiet night.

This was the last opportunity he had during the evening to converse with Marabel. Several other young gentlemen claimed her attention so as entirely to exclude Earnest. So when he and Gerould took their leave he was out of spirits and out of humor. Gerould was radiant. They walked along in silence till they nearly reached home, when Earnest said :

“Gerould, you are a wretch.”

“I confess it,” with a happy smile.

“You are a brute.”

“At your service, sir,” and he slipped his hand through the arm of Earnest with a cheerful countenance for a—brute.

“Now, you are a hypocrite. You want to conciliate me, do you? It is no use; I am seriously offended. I shall not be easily appeased.”

“But I am penitent.”

“Pshaw!” with a manifest contempt. “You would do the same thing over to-morrow if you had an opportunity.”

“But reflect how great the temptation was which merits some consideration.” Then he went off at a tangent. “Oh, I have spent such a jolly evening, perfectly delicious. She is a charmer, above all her sex. When she is Mrs. Gerould Wingrove, you shall come to see us, old fellow, and stay a

week—no, a year. But it did look mean to slip in on you when you had everything so nice in the alcove. Hang it, I ought to have been in your place, and I should have settled the matter to-night. How did you manage to decoy her into such a happy retreat?"

They had reached their gate and Earnest said coldly :

"Suppose we drop this subject, it is unpleasant to me to-night.

A surprised and puzzled look was on Gerould's face, but he only said : "Certainly." He was too happy to be uncharitable, and yet he did wonder what had so suddenly come over his friend. "In love with her, too, I'll bet," was the conclusion of his brief speculation. "I am so sorry for him," was his next thought, which, in one respect, did justice to his heart.

Earnest lay awake that night studying over the problem of his life. There had slowly grown up in his heart, the worthy desire to gather up the facts that constituted his history from his childhood until now. This wish had been immensely stimulated by his conversation with Marabel. He was resolved to mature a plan which he would carry into effect as soon as his college term closed.

The impressions he had of his early life satisfied him that his father had been wealthy. What had become of this property? He could not escape asking himself this question, nor could he escape a deepening desire for a conclusive answer. That

his half uncle had some connection with his father's estate, he did not for one moment doubt. He resolved to investigate the whole matter, and, if possible, secure what was rightly his own.

A little before day he fell asleep and as a result he was late at breakfast. When he came to the table, he found Mrs. Stanley and a gentleman only. The other boarders had been to breakfast and left the house. Mrs. Stanley introduced the gentleman as her son, who was doing business in New York.

"I had some business in Louisville and thought to pay mother a flying visit," he said. He was a middle-aged man, gentlemanly in appearance and behavior.

He continued: "It is a pleasure to get out of the city and enjoy country life for a little while."

"I suppose so," responded Earnest, "though I have had no experience of city life since I was a small boy. I was born in New York."

"Indeed," looking up with interest. They were alone at the table now, Mrs. Stanley having left.

"Yes, I was some twelve years old when I left there."

"When I first went to New York, I was clerk in the store of a man by your name. No relation, I suppose?"

"What was his given name?" with evident interest.

"William."

"That was my father's name."

“Is it possible? What became of your father?”

“He died of the cholera.”

“When it raged as an epidemic in the city?”

“Yes.”

Mr. Stanley sprang to his feet excitedly. “Give me your hand, young man, you are an old acquaintance. I shall never forget the last time I saw your father. True to his nature, he came to see me at the hospital when I had the cholera. It was a terrible risk to run, as events proved. I shall always remember how he trembled and staggered when he left the hospital. It filled me with gloomy forebodings, and when I heard from him he was dead. And you are the son of William Leighton?” He held his hand and looked at him earnestly.

“Yes, I am the son of William Leighton.”

“Well, he was a good man and I am indebted to him for many a favor. I fear I was the innocent cause of his taking the cholera, that resulted in the death of himself and wife. I am glad to meet you, for I shall never forget your father.”

He released Earnest's hand and took his seat, but continued to speak: “Those were terrible times. It makes my blood run cold to think about it. I thought every body was dying. I suppose I should have closed my earthly account if it had not been for the Catholics. They took me to one of their hospitals and nursed me through. I owe them a debt I can never repay. But my great calamity was the death of your father. Sir, he was a most excellent man.”

Earnest said with much eagerness: "It is certainly a great pleasure to know one who was acquainted with my father. How long were you in his service?"

"About five years."

"Then you know well the details of his business?"

"Certainly, very well indeed."

Earnest spoke with suppressed excitement: "I am almost wholly ignorant of my family. I have a faint recollection of facts connected with my childhood, but they are scattered and unsatisfactory. I can not tell you how deep an interest I feel in one who has known my father and mother. Then you can tell me many things I have longed to know through all these years."

"You say you are not familiar with your family history?"

"I am not."

"Ah!"

Mr. Stanley was surprised, and he began to collect certain lost points in the events of the past. He was first to speak:

"I never thought of it before, I was so surprised to meet you, but there is a mystery about your being here. It seems to me that you, someway, dropped out of sight awhile after the death of your father. I remember there was some talk about it, but I have forgotten the particulars. I supposed you were in the hands of your uncle."

"The truth is, I was in the hands of my uncle, but I ran away from him. But he never spoke of

my father, and since I left I have heard nothing of him."

"It might have been better if you had not run away."

"There is no profit in discussing that question. But can you tell me whether my father was rich or poor?"

"He was rich, very rich."

"What became of his property?"

"I can not fully answer that question. When I recovered, I remained in the store until the goods were closed out and the house rented. It was reported that Father Manning had charge of your father's estate, and a lawyer of his saw to the business of the store. I suppose he still holds the property in trust. In the case of your death he would be the next heir—wait, did you not have a sister?"

"Yes."

"Where is she?"

"Father Manning says she is dead."

"He says she is dead! Do you not know it?"

"No."

"More mystery than ever."

Earnest made no explanation, but asked: "Do you think Father Manning still holds my property?"

"Yes, I do not see how he could dispose of it before your death."

They talked much longer, and Earnest was satisfied that he had interests in New York demanding his personal attention. He resolved to go thither so soon as the summer vacation should come.

CHAPTER XX.

LOVE.

Since the last conversation noted between Earnest and Marabel, they had frequently met. But the latter had become suddenly reticent on the subject that vitally interested the former. She avoided all reference to New York, and evaded every remark that might introduce the objectionable theme.

It was already the beginning of January, and the season so far had been one of unusual gayety. Gerould Wingrove still continued to monopolize as much of Marabel's company as possible. But he was no longer the gay Gerould of a few weeks before. He was far more silent, and was fond of solitary walks. This genial young fellow was standing in the presence of the great passion of his life. He was passing a limit back of which he would never return. The delicious sweetness of his first love was embittered by a doubt that had lately come into his heart to drive away all peace.

Gradually Gerould and Earnest had ceased to speak to each other about Marabel. They conversed on every topic save the one that had an absorbing interest to both of them. But about this time an event occurred that was annoying to Earnest Leighton. The society of which he was a mem-

ber determined to have an open session, to be held immediately after the Christmas holiday. He was chosen as one of the four debaters. But his arrangements compelled him to leave Lexington before a question had been selected. He promised to abide by the decision of the two leaders, and they were to notify him as early as possible after the subject for discussion had been determined. This notification never reached him until after his return, and only some four days before the appointed time.

Just on the eve of his departure he engaged Marabel's company for the exhibition; and immediately on his return the question was handed him, and it read as follows: "Affirmed, that the Catholic Confessional is contrary to the genius of our American Institutions." He was an affirmant.

Delicacy of feeling was one of the characteristics of Earnest. Under ordinary circumstances no topic could have been selected upon which he would have more cheerfully displayed his didactic skill. But on this occasion he had sought the company of a Catholic lady, and he felt that it was treating her rudely for him to engage in the controversy.

He made an earnest endeavor to have the subject changed, but in this he failed. Some of the disputants were absent, and would not return till the evening on which the society held its open session. In view of this fact, it was impossible to select another question.

He sought then for a substitute, but in this he was equally unsuccessful. His general information on the question was everywhere acknowledged, and the society was not willing to release him without the best of reasons. He hesitated to give the true reason. It would have connected his name with Miss Langford's in such a manner as to be unpleasant, especially when we consider the natural trickiness of college boys. He was unwilling to be victimized by his class-mates.

As he strolled to his room from the society hall, on that evening, he was in rather low spirits. It was a definite case of *ennui*. He did on that occasion what every young man does under like circumstances: he severely reprobated his actions. He was constantly throwing himself in the society of a lady whom he ought not to love. Every day she was getting more and more into his heart. This was just like a woman, and he knew it. But he still continued to seek her company, as dangerous as he knew it to be. He promised himself of course, in common with all men, that every visit should be the last one, when in reality it was only a stimulant for another.

He reached the yard-gate of his boarding-house, and, leaning on it, he gazed up into the sweet face of the clear starry night. It was full of solemn splendor, and its glory was in his soul. The evening wind, as it sighed among the barren branches, the silent depth of the heavens, the far away sky, the bright night-watchers, that were holding their

sentinel positions in the great field above—all filled his heart with a strange mysterious rapture. How precious in such moments is the memory of the dead! Earnest Leighton reached out his arms, and his noble face was all aglow, as he murmured: “Oh my mother, my precious mother, is your home up there?” His head sank upon his arm, and the glow passed from his face, as there came back to him the thought of his condition. With a pained, empty feeling in his heart, he opened the gate, passed through into the house, and closed the night without.

The morning came at last, though the hours were long and sleepless. Earnest Leighton had been fighting, with the courage of desperation, the love of his heart. It was a hopeless conflict, although he thought he was the victor. He arose from his bed, walked across the room, and gazed out on the young morning. There is something in the freshness of early day that gives a man strength. His first thoughts were of Marabel, and he said to himself half bitterly: “I was a very great fool in loving her. Even if I could win her, I could never gain my consent to marry her. This visiting her is all wrong, and I *will* quit it.” There was a momentary pleasure in this determination—it would end in more than momentary pain.

Just then that troublesome debate came to his mind, and his brow clouded. But he determined on an open, manly course. He would call on Marabel, state all the facts to her, and then be

governed by her decision. This would furnish him with a pretext for paying her an extra visit, but he made no such acknowledgement to himself.

It was in the afternoon that he walked across to Mrs. Livingston's. He had to wait but a few moments before Marabel Langford made her appearance. He had already determined what he would say to her, but her presence had the wonderful effect of scattering his thoughts. They spent a full half hour in conversation before Earnest could approach the main topic that prompted his visit. He made several staggering attempts, which at last resulted in his saying :

"You have not forgotten, Miss Marabel, the open session on Thursday evening?"

"Oh, no," she replied: "I have been promising myself much pleasure on that evening. I believe Mr. Leighton is one of the speakers," she added archly.

"To my regret, I am," rejoined Earnest.

"I can not regret that you are," she said sincerely. "We enjoy the efforts of our friends and acquaintances more than those of strangers. I know no one in the society except yourself and Mr. Wingrove."

There was a momentary pause, in which Earnest bit his lips, and then: "Do you know the question for discussion, Miss Marabel?"

"No, sir, I do not," she replied. And then noticing his troubled and embarrassed face, she asked: "Is the question a very serious one, Mr. Leighton? you look very solemn."

“Yes,” he said, “to me it is. I came over to tell you all about it. During my absence, the boys selected a question which involves the discussion of the Confessional of your church. At this late day I can not succeed in getting it changed. I can not tell what you will think of me for accompanying you to our society hall for the purpose of hearing me declaim against your religion. I feel greatly humiliated, and hardly know what to suggest. You can scarcely deem me mean enough to seek such an opportunity to prejudice you against your faith.”

“I am not afraid of being proselyted by your society, Mr. Leighton,” said Marabel, in her proud, imperious way.

“Miss Langford is aware that I meant nothing of that sort,” rejoined Earnest, in a pained tone. “I felt, under the circumstances, that it would be discourteous in me to accompany you without first informing you of this fact. I beg your pardon if I have said anything to wound you, and if you are not sensitive on this matter, I will most gladly call on Thursday evening.” Earnest’s face was flushed, and he had the appearance of being greatly annoyed.

Marabel’s quick eye detected this, and she felt she had done him an injustice. Her whole demeanor was changed in an instant, her bewitching, fatal smile was on her lips, as she said: *I* should beg *your* pardon. It was generous in you to come to tell me of what you feared would be

unpleasant to me. I did wrong in misjudging you for a single moment. Now I shall gladly go with you, and I do not wish you to mar your speech on account of my presence. I want to hear everything you can say against the Confessional." As she said this, there came into her eyes a wistful look, that gradually faded away before the approach of tears.

The face of Earnest was eloquent in its sympathy, for he knew full well that those tears were called up by some sad memories.

He hesitated a moment, and then said, with a slight tremor in his voice: "Am I to understand, Miss Marabel, that you really have an interest in the subject we propose to discuss?"

Again that wistful, far away look came into her eyes, and she replied, in a voice of saddest music: "Yes, a very, very deep interest do I feel in the Confessional."

She was silent for a few seconds, and then continued, with that deep, passionate utterance that always characterized her when under the influence of some strong feeling: "Mr. Leighton, we Catholics have struggles as well as you Protestants. Our hearts are tortured by all the bitterness of doubt. We are placed upon the rack of our own conflicting opinions, and it is to us an Inquisition. I do not mean that this is true of all of us; it is only true of a part. But I belong to that sad part. I had a mother once," there were tears in her eyes now, "and when we laid her away she left me as

an only token a Bible. O, how I have hugged that to my heart, how I have pressed it to my lips, how I have dreamed over its comforting lessons! This Bible has raised in my own mind—”

Just then there was a knock on the door, and, without waiting for a reply, it was opened, and Father Neigler entered. He cast a sharp, warning glance at Marabel, and then suddenly changing countenance, he approached Earnest with extended hand, saying: “Ah, Mr. Leighton, glad to see you, glad to see you, sir.”

Earnest returned the salutation with a marked absence of fervor, and the expression of Marabel’s face very clearly indicated that she resented the intrusion as an insult. But neither the one nor the other seemed to have any effect on the priest, for he seated himself with a self-satisfied air, and opened the conversation by remarking .

“Fine, fresh evening, my dear sir, fine evening.”

“The steady, cold weather that we have had for several days is altogether agreeable,” rejoined Earnest, dryly.

“Oh, delightful, sir, delightful, so much better than an open winter.”

Earnest, thinking this remark needed no reply, said to Marabel: “Miss Langford must excuse me now, but I shall gratify myself by calling early on Thursday evening.”

“I shall expect you then,” said Marabel, rising, “a little in advance of the society hour.”

When the door closed behind Earnest, Marabel

Langford confronted Father Neigler. There was indignation and contempt in her deep blue eyes, mingled with a certain vague expression of hopelessness.

But the priest himself is worthy of one word of description. He was below rather than above the average size. He was of a sallow complexion, with deep set eyes, and a high, narrow head. His hands were long and bony, nervous and twitching. There was a careless shabbiness about his dress, and a stiff rigidity about his person. There was nothing at all prepossessing about the man, save only the indefinable consciousness that you were in the presence of a person who possessed an inexhaustible force of character. This man was the incarnation of the expression: "*There is no such thing as failure.*" He was genuine steele, and was invulnerable to rust, which sometimes corrodes that metal.

He looked at Marabel with a calm, fixed look, that finally bore down her gaze before it. He stood there like a motionless statue, that was shabby and ugly, but that possessed a fierce, penetrating eye-power.

Marabel was trembling violently, and at last she cried out in a voice of despair: "For heaven's sake do not gaze at me any longer, but say at once the worst you have to say."

Without changing his eyes, Father Neigler said: "I heard, about an hour since, that Johnnie Renegan fell on the ice and broke his arm. Could

you run over to see him for a few moments this evening?"

"Oh, yes. Shall I go at once?" with a deep sigh of relief.

"Certainly."

"I will run up stairs immediately, get my wrappings and start."

In a moment she was gone, and the priest was left alone. He seated himself in a chair with his usual stiff movement, leaned his head forward on his hand, and seemed to be in very deep thought. He sat in this motionless position for a full half hour, then he arose and walked out of the room with the air of a man who was fully satisfied with the measures he had adopted.

Marabel ran out of the house with a lighter heart, to visit Johnnie Rennegan. As she walked briskly along she said to herself: "How glad I am to get away from him, and how I do despise him, and—and—fear him." Then her eyes would sparkle, and her lips would close firmly, as she would recall the many indignities she had suffered from the hands of Father Neigler. "If my brother, my precious brother, were here," she murmured, "he would resent these insults. But, poor brother, I have not heard from him for so long, I fear something has befallen him." And then the tender hearted sister forgot her own troubles in musing over the probable misfortunes that might have fallen to her brother's lot.

She spent an hour with Johnnie, and did much

to soothe the pain of the little fellow. And, making him a promise to come again, she returned home with the dread of meeting Father Neigler. The priest did not make his appearance, and the Madam only stopped her in the hall long enough to ask about the sick boy, and to say, on parting: "I am really glad that Mr. Leighton is becoming interested in you. I hope you will succeed in proselyting him."

The impulsive girl paused in her ascent of the stairs, and said proudly: "I could give no man my heart's best love that would become a proselyte for my sake."

"Oh, of course, it will be a question of principle when he changes," said the Madam, with a vexatious little laugh. So they parted for the night, leaving Marabel in no very pleasant frame of mind.

Earnest went home with a lighter heart than he had carried in his breast for many a day. His whole soul was now full of Marabel Langford, and he experienced a delicious sense of possession. His ardent fancy carried him beyond the real difficulties in his way, and his fine poetic nature was quickened by this new-risen hope in his life. He recalled every word she had said in that brief conversation, which was interrupted by the entrance of the priest. The gathering tears in her eyes had made a deep impression on this susceptible young man, and there was a sweetness he could not fathom in the remembrance of the tender allusion to her mother's Bible. "Ah," he mused as he

wended his way homeward, "she loves her Bible, loves her Bible! With her rich nature, it is impossible that she should do that and cling to the Catholic Church," and there came into his dark eyes a wealth of tenderness that would have enriched any woman.

There was an unconscious selfishness in the pleasure he experienced over the fact that this woman loved her Bible. He felt that the difference in their religious faith was the one barrier that intervened between the union of their lives. Change with him was impossible. Was it not equally vain to hope that she would change from the faith in which she had been educated? But that this very thing would happen in the future was the source of his present joy. And yet Earnest Leighton was too manly to try to proselyte a woman in order to marry her. But the very result, which every element of his manhood would have recoiled from trying to produce, was that which, above all other things, he wished to see accomplished. As honest as he was, in meditating over the possibility of Marabel's becoming a Protestant, he did not consider for a single instant the well-being of her soul, but was wholly absorbed in his own prospective happiness. Such is the selfishness of our natures.

Earnest dreamed away the time intervening between his visit and the evening of the open session. But at last the long looked for Thursday came. How impatiently we can await the coming

of a given time, and how rapidly that time may pass away !

In the afternoon of that day Marabel came into the parlor to put, with her own light fingers, the finishing touches on the arrangement of its furniture. There was a fairy grace in every movement, and far down in those limpid blue eyes was the silent glory of happiness that struggled up to her lips in a soft, sweet smile. She had completed her pleasant duty, and was standing in front of the fire-place, with her hands clasped before her, gazing dreamily at the red-hot coals that were nestling in the grate. The door opened with noiseless movement, and with soundless tread, Father Neigler entered, crossed the room, and stood leaning with his hand upon the marble mantel-piece, before he was observed by Marabel.

She started violently, though she uttered no cry, but there came into her eyes a pained, haunted expression, her delicate, tapering hands were clenched with a spasmodic movement, and her lips became as white and firm as marble. Her whole appearance was the personification of a forlorn hope. She had just been gathering the flowers to twine a wreath for love, but she would scatter them now on love's grave.

The priest stood there with his cold, impassioned face turned full upon her. The bright sparkling eyes of the serpent had no more deadly, charming power than those sunken orbs of this priest. Marabel struggled under their cruel, penetrating

gaze, then with a reckless air she walked resolutely toward the door. Her hand was already on the knob, when the cold, measured, incisive tones of the priest fell on her ear:

"I wish to talk to you, Marabel Langford. Will you please take that seat?" and he pointed to a chair that was immediately in front of him.

Her whole nature was in rebellion at the character and manner of this request, and she said haughtily, with an imperial shake of her head: "Ladies, I believe, Father Neigler, have a voice in choosing their company."

"It would be better if ladies did not act the fool, especially when they have brothers on the verge of ruin!" This was said in the same calm, immovable way, as if everything were happening as he had expected.

A sudden pallor overspread Marabel's face, as she quietly walked across the room, and sank into the indicated chair; then there came faltering from her pale lips: "My brother! tell me all about my brother!"

She had not heard from him for several weeks, and her sister-heart was growing anxious. For days past she had been conjecturing every possible evil, and she was now in that frame of mind when a hint of trouble would be magnified into the positive assurance of a calamity.

She leaned forward now with her wistful eyes full of tears, and said in a low tone: "Has anything befallen my brother? Oh, please tell me about him."

The priest stood there as immovable as a rock, with a face that had in it not a single trace of sympathy. His deep eyes had been wandering for a moment, but they were again bent with all their fascinating power, on the trembling girl before him.

Then he said in his cruel, sneering tone: "It is contemptible for one who has received the blessings and charitable benefits of our Holy Church to become treacherous."

Marabel felt a cold shudder pass over her, and she struggled hard to regain her self-possession.

"I have known girls," he continued in the same cutting tone, "Catholic girls, who would sacrifice their holiest convictions for some pretty faced, milk-and-cider Protestant. *I* have known just such girls."

Marabel sprang to her feet, drew herself up till she looked a very queen, with the wild flame of excitement burning in her splendid blue eyes, and said in a low, subdued voice, full of passion, full of outraged womanhood: "Father Neigler, *I* am not *that* woman."

"Indeed," with indescribable scorn, "did *I* say you were? It seems to me you are touchy this evening, almost suspiciously so, I might add. Of course, you are a little bundle of perfection—Father Mallory has so written me. Some girls, though, annoying girls, are always carrying around with them a little Bible, with a pretense to devotion and piety. You don't belong to this class—*certainly not.*"

“Oh, my God!” was wrung from the girl’s heart. “I have my mother’s Bible, the only gift of my dear precious mother,” and she buried her face in her hands and wept.

The priest stood there, silent, immovable, till the storm of grief had subsided: then he drew nearer to where she sat, and said in a low tone, peculiar to him at certain times, a tone in which were strangely blended authority and appeal, and yet combined with a manner that carried conviction to the listener’s heart that he was expressing an unalterable wish against which it was useless to rebel. There was something about him in such moments that was half caressing, but the claws of death were always visible under the soft purring touch, and they acted as a fearful warning against any meditated resistance. The chill at Marabel’s heart grew colder as he spoke.

He said: “I advise you to listen to what I have to say, and to profit by my suggestions. This is your wisest course, for you well know that you are fully in my power. Young people can not hide the fact that they love each other from an observant eye. Love is a light in the heart that can not be hidden under a bushel. It shows itself in a hundred ways, even when the parties are trying to conceal it. I am aware that you and Earnest Leighton love each other, though no word of love has ever been spoken between you. It has been a silent surrender of the heart’s best affection. Mr. Leighton will never forget you, although at some

future day he may marry another woman. But you have touched a spring in his heart that will always vibrate, and it will always produce memory's sweetest music. He has a strong nature, strong to suffer and strong to do. He would die before he would yield his principles; he has the 'stuff' in him out of which martyrs are made. There is no hope of the union of you two unless you forsake the Catholic Church, or he is won to recognize the church's high and holy claim upon him. There are many reasons why we wish him as a proselyte. These reasons grow out of facts in his past history that I can not repeat to you. But your interest and the church's interest are identical. The day he becomes a Catholic, will witness the symbol of love on your finger, which holds in its charmed circle the sacred promise of marriage. This is the true destiny of woman, and it is the goal of your happiness. But this can never be accomplished while Earnest Leighton is in Lexington. We must have him in New York, where strong guards may be thrown around him, and where influences may be brought to bear on him which he can not resist. But this can not be accomplished without your assistance. You alone can entice him to New York. Earnest Leighton is a man that will make any honorable sacrifice for the woman he loves. He loves you. Induce him to visit the metropolis at the intermediate examination, which will occur in February; in the mean-time, of course, you will return. Once get him there, and Father Mal-

lory will answer for the rest. Let me specify what I wish you to do: Earnest Leighton accompanies you to-night to the open session of his society. Use all your womanly art and womanly tact to get him to make advances. Play the little game of your mother's Bible, which you so adroitly and unconsciously introduced the other night, and with such happy effect upon your subject. By a stroke of good fortune, the question for discussion this evening is one referring to the Confessional. Sympathize with his views a little, but retain sufficient doubt to enlist his interest in your behalf. Gradually direct your conversation to sentimental topics, and finally, force him to a confession of his love. You can easily accomplish this if you will. This you know. But to the all-important question, say that you are compelled to return to New York immediately, and if he will come to see you in February, he shall have an answer. Assign as a reason for this delay that you wish to pass from under the cloud of doubts concerning the truthfulness of Catholicism, and then lead him to believe his visit will be crowned by an affirmative answer. The end justifies the means you know, besides many girls treat men worse than this without any special motive, beyond gratifying their love for flirting. But I imperatively demand all of this from your hands to-night—I will accept no refusal, nor bear with any failure. What say you?"

When Father Neigler paused, the stillness in the

room was so profound that one could hear the beating of Marabel's heart. As he spoke of Earnest's love for her, a tender light came into her eyes, and a rich glow spread over her cheek and brow, but before he had finished an ashy paleness covered her face, and her bloodless lips were compressed in silent agony. She made several efforts to speak before she succeeded, and all the while the potent eyes of the priest were bent upon her.

At last, pressing both her hands on her heart, she gasped: "I can't; oh, I can't."

A sardonic smile was on the lips of the priest as he said, in his merciless tones: "Very well, your answer is all I wished. You will never see Louis Langford again."

"Spare my brother," she cried, "for the love of heaven, spare my dear brother, and I will do anything—everything that you wish me to do." And the poor girl leaned forward her head, and, rocking to and fro, moaned out her great, deep agony.

The priest only said: "I have given you my instructions, and you know the penalty if you fail me," then without another word he walked out of the room.

* * * * *

Later in the evening Earnest arrived, and Marabel received him with a tolerably cheerful face, but a very sad heart. She was enduring all the anguish of indecision. The fearful threat of Father Neigler was driving her almost mad. If she failed to follow his instructions it was ruin to

her brother ; if she complied with them, she was fearful that the same disaster would befall Earnest. Could she choose between these two men, who were equally noble, if not equally dear?

Earnest had come in the best of spirits, with his whole nature aglow with the delicious enthusiasm of hope. The demeanor of Marabel had thrown a chill over him, which was the more unpleasant because he attributed her actions to the dislike she entertained for the position he held in the discussion of that evening. Their conversation, then, was very common-place during their walk to the society hall. There were two young people, walking along side by side, each wholly absorbed in thought of the other, and yet they were talking of the driest and most uninteresting details of ordinary experiences. Such things as this often happen in life, where the heavy burden remains unlifted, because the right word remains unspoken.

It was not long after they reached the hall before the session was opened, and in a very short time the question for the debate was read. We have only to do briefly with Earnest's part in the discussion. When he first appeared on the floor he was very much embarrassed, but by a manly struggle he soon regained his self-possession. His interest in his theme gradually led him to forget the presence of Marabel. Earnest Leighton was an accomplished speaker, and when under the inspiration of his deepest convictions, he often rose to the height of impassioned eloquence. On this night he sur-

passed himself. He arraigned the Confessional before the tribunal of history, and placed upon it the scathing verdict of self-condemnation. He poured the light of his research into the dark corners where were hidden the loathsome iniquities accomplished under the veil of secrecy. He brought it up before the judgment-seat of God's word, and arraigned every earthly priest for treason in the presence of the High Priest of Heaven. The life of the human soul depended upon no human intercession. No priest has the right to stand between man's sin-sick heart and the great Physician of this spiritual malady.

When Earnest ceased to speak, the silence was broken by the deep drawn sigh that marks the culmination of the profound interest of an audience. His speech had been successful, and there was a glow of gratitude in his heart, not unmingled with anxiety as to how Marabel Langford might view his effort.

During their walk home there were not many words spoken, but they were words full of rich, tender meaning—lowly, softly spoken, registering in each heart a feeling that had in it all the infinitude of love. It would be better if we could leave them here in the full enjoyment of this moment never to be forgotten. Oh, the impassionate tenderness of human souls in the first consciousness of requited love.

Soon they were seated on a divan in the cozy little parlor, close to a cheerful winter fire. There

was a silence that had something sacred in it, which was at last broken by Marabel, in her low, musical voice :

“Mr. Leighton, I want to thank you for your speech. I believe every word of it. I came to the faith I hold now by the weary steps of painful doubting.”

Earnest met her wistful look with his frank, open smile, as he replied : “You have changed your faith, then, as regards the Confessional?”

“Yes, and I know not how much beyond it.”

His heart yearned to say that he hoped she would renounce every claim on the Catholic Church, but this was the voice of selfishness, and Earnest Leighton was manly.

He only said, sadly said : “I sympathize with you so deeply in this, your mental struggle.”

She involuntarily reached out her hand to him, as she rejoined : “How grateful I am for your sympathy ; it will give me strength.”

Their eyes met in one revealing gaze, and their hands clasped in one electric touch.

The surge of feeling in the heart of Earnest mastered him, and, bowing his head over her hands, he said : “I love you, fondly love you ; love you better than my life.”

The waves of her hair brushed his brow as she breathed her pained reply : “Oh, Earnest, Earnest, I am a Catholic.”

“Not that way, not that way,” he murmured, “it is I who am a Protestant.”

For a moment she ran her white, tapering fingers through his dark hair, and gazed at him with something like adoration in her eyes. Then she said :

“Earnest, do you love me well enough to grant me a very great favor?”

He lifted up his face, so pale now, as he replied : “Your woman’s heart can answer that question. What is your request?”

“I have many things to say to you, which I can not say now. I am compelled to return home early next week, and can not see you again before I start. In a little over a month your intermediate examination will be held, and at that time I plead for a visit from you. Will you not come to New York to see *me*?”

“You may expect to see me in your city before February closes,” said Earnest, with a bright face.

A few moments later the good-night was spoken, and Earnest was gone. When left alone, there came into Marabel’s face an expression of keen anguish, as she paced the floor with clasped hands. There escaped from her set lips the moan : “Oh, the agony, the agony of this suspense ! Will they dare to harm my precious lover?”

CHAPTER XXI.

THE PRISONER.

On a prominent street in New York, centrally located, was a fine Cathedral. It was the resort of the fashionable members of the Catholic Church, and its style of architecture and elegant finish were sufficient to charm the most fastidious taste. At all regular services, the dark aisles of the church were thronged with worshipers.

One day about the middle of January a man might have been seen walking along the street with a basket on his arm. He went to a small door at the rear of the church, took a key from his pocket, placed it in the lock, looked carefully around, then turned the bolt and quickly entered. He locked the door after him.

He found himself in a short, dimly lighted hall, along which he made his way. It was guarded at the further end by a heavy oak door through which he passed. Then he lighted a small lantern and descended a long flight of steps, which were terminated by a ponderous iron door. This door opened into a small room that was made at the foundation of one of the many towers that ornamented this splendid building. It was some ten

feet in diameter, and all the light it had came from above.

The floor of this room was heavy rock, in the center of which was a strong trap-door made of iron. In the center of the trap there was a small opening, through which one could easily slip his hand. The door was heavily barred and locked. It opened into a prison cell some eight feet deep.

The man set his basket down, knelt on the iron, and peered through the hole into the cell beneath. It required some time for his eyes to become accustomed to the darkness; then he saw an object sitting on one side of the cell, with its head drooped between its knees. It was the very picture of suffering and wretchedness.

The man gave a shrill whistle, and the object suddenly started and painfully raised to its feet.

It was one created in the image of God, but how marred and broken was the image!

"How are you, my heretic?" from the man above. The other lifted his head and gazed upwards. The face belonged to a young man, but it was growing rapidly old in this place. You would hardly have called it pale, it was the color of ashes. It was haggard and pain-stricken, and yet it had something in it—an under-current of fire—that indicated an unconquerable spirit had its abode in that tortured body.

"Well, how are you making it, old fellow?"

The face actually smiled.

"As well as one could expect, considering my hotel accommodations."

“Don’t feel a little sick of your bargain?”

“No, because I made up my mind to face the worst, and I suppose I am facing it. By this I do not mean that I am especially charmed with my quarters.”

“Humph! how much better to be pious! Then you could have a good fat position, plenty of wine to drink, not much work, but an easy time generally.”

The man below was shading his eyes and trying in the dim light to get a glimpse of the face above. Presently:

“Is it John?”

“John at your service, sir.”

“I thank the Lord for that. Have you anything to eat in that basket?”

“Yes.”

“Pass it down.”

“A heretic should not be in such a hurry.”

“But a heretic is awful hungry.”

“Well, here it goes.”

The basket was let down and the half famished man began eating greedily. John watched him in silence for awhile, then said:

“A little hungry, I should think.”

“A *little!*” and the man laughed bitterly, but he lost no time in eating.

“By the way, John,” he said, when he had partly satisfied the cravings of his appetite, “what has become of the scalawag that has been bringing my dinner?”

"I switched him off the track with a cunning dose of medicine."

"Why?"

"I wanted to see how a renegade priest looks when he is juggled."

"Kind of you. How do you think he looks?"

"He has degenerated physically as well as morally. If he continues a little while longer, he will be—dead."

"You are an encouraging wretch," said the man below as he continued to eat.

John was silent for a little while, when he asked abruptly: "Would you like to escape?"

He dropped the provisions he held in his hand, and sprang up with astonishing energy in one so weak. He uttered a single word, but he uttered it with impassionate force.

"Yes."

"You are in earnest about it, are you not, old fellow? Now, suppose I should help you out, would you go away somewhere and be a good priest?"

"No," fiercely and defiantly.

"Humph! haven't been starved long enough."

The man sat down again and began eating silently.

"Sulky, I suppose," said John.

"No, only hungry. You bring me better dinners than the dog who preceded you. Keep him sick won't you?"

"No, it hurts my conscience. I have a very

tender conscience. Only think of it—I stole more than half the provision in that basket. Father Mallory portioned out your allowance, and I managed on the sly to chug in quite a morsel besides. I shall have to do penance for all this. My conscience torments me terribly.”

“I am sorry that your conscience is so tender. But when are you going to try to get me out of here?”

“That is a dangerous business.”

“Certainly; but it is death to stay here.”

“Not to me.”

The man in the cell whistled.

“You are a plucky chap,” from John.

“It is better never to say die; but if one must die, he should meet death bravely.”

While they were talking, John closely examined the fastenings of the trap-door.

“I say, they sealed this jug pretty tight, old boy.”

“Can’t you file through?”

“Don’t know. Pass up your basket if you are through eating.”

John took the basket and left without another word, locking the doors after him. Louis Langford doubled a comfort he had, and sat down on it. He was very much emaciated, and his imprisonment was surely and fatally telling on him. The long dark nights, beginning so early in the evening and ending so late in the morning, were shattering his nervous system and undermining his will-power.

He saw this, and it made him tremble for the future. He was not afraid of death, could face it anywhere, but to lose his strength by privation, his will, his courage, then to die a miserable, cringing being, was more than he could bear.

"I'll not give up," he said "I'll not become melancholy, I'll brave everything."

He began walking around his narrow cell, and throwing his arms about, to call into action every muscle of his body. But he was fighting against cold, darkness, bad air, dampness, and unutterable loneliness and dreariness of heart. It was a cruel and unequal contest.

One day soon after John's visit, Father Mallory came to see him. The priest peered down at him for a long while, with his sinister little eyes, before he said anything.

"Art thou happy, my, son?" he said with mock solemnity.

"Happier than you are, my persecutor," he said indignantly.

The priest gazed on him with savage delight as he marked the ravages of privation and suffering.

"Do you feel penitent for your many sins?"

"I trust I am penitent for all my sins."

"Then you are sorry that you tried to steal a nun out of the convent?"

"I am not sorry that I tried to release Sister Angelica who is no nun, and whom I did not try to steal."

"By jove, there is not much penitence about you,

if I am any judge. I'll decrease your rations until you are willing to come down on your knees to me, you vile thing, who dares call himself a priest."

"I do not wish to be called a priest. I never wanted to be one, but you morally compelled me to adopt the profession. You had my education in your hands, why did you not make me different?"

"Because of the latent meanness in you. I did my best. But enough of this; I came here to talk to you on business. I do not want to see you perish in this hole. I shall be charitable. I offer you your freedom on certain conditions."

"Name your conditions."

"You know that you have been very troublesome to me here. We have no work in New York, adapted to your peculiar ability, but in other places we may find something to keep you busy. We have a special mission in Mexico for which we need a few priests. Renounce all efforts to disturb us here, consent to go there, pledging yourself to remain five years, and we will at once place you in safe hands and ship you. What do you say?"

"Will you release Sister Angelica from the convent?"

"Certainly not. What the thunder has that to do with your accepting my proposition?"

"Very much—indeed everything. I shall never consent to leave New York for any time until she is released from her present imprisonment."

Mallory reached far down into the cell and shook his fist at him, as he cried:

“Do you defy me, you wretch? I’ll make every bone in your body ache for that. I curse you with every curse of the church. May the damnation of the prince of devils be upon you in fires everlasting. Villain, wretch, renegade! You shall have a crust of bread only to stay your appetite, a drop of water to quench your thirst, until you get down on your knees and beg me for mercy.”

The angry man spit at him, then sprang to his feet, turned on his heel and went away, swearing swift and terrible punishment on his defenceless prisoner. The brave heart of Louis Langford sank at these fearful threats. He knew that Mallory would hesitate at no cruelty that would likely accomplish his ends. He was surely approaching the worst of his many bitter experiences.

His only hope was in John, and he waited in painful anxiety for his coming. The evening came, but another brought him his food. It was the one who had always served him, except in the single instance when John had taken his place. This man had never spoken to him a single kind word. He was a fit tool for the service of Father Mallory.

The priest had been true to his threat, for the supply of both bread and water was fearfully meager. Louis ate this scanty meal with painful misgivings. He knew too well that his strength would not bear greater privations.

But still he hoped for some change, hoped that

John would return and help him to escape. But days went by and still the same silent and unsympathetic face peered down on him from above, and gave him the wretched allowance of bread and water. He could bear this silence no longer, so he spoke to him one day, but no response came. He tried to coax a word from him, but his effort was unavailing. The man went away, leaving a fellow-being wild to hear a human voice.

He grew weak and still weaker. Every bone in his body ached with mortal pain. One day he was seized with crampings in the stomach, followed by burning sensations. He was in torture. His nights became sleepless, and when he would fall into a dose frightful visions would sweep before his mind, and these were so real and vivid that they would even possess his wakeful moments. A wild and terrible light was creeping into his eyes, and an awful frenzy was seizing his brain. There were moments when he was conscious of his condition, and at such times he would fight against madness with his admirable courage.

One day Mallory came again—to taunt him.

“Will you go to Mexico now, and leave your Angelica?” he asked, when he had stared at him awhile. He reached his hand through the hole and pointed his finger scornfully at the woe-begone image.

Louis gnashed his teeth in helpless rage as he tramped around his narrow cell. He paused a moment and looked up at Mallory, his eyes burn-

ing like two coals of fire. A laugh of derision came to his ears and he saw the hateful finger pointing at him. All of a sudden he made a frantic leap, and grasped Mallory's wrist in the iron grip of frenzy. In another second he had drawn himself up and planted his sharp teeth in the priest's arm. Mallory roared with fright and pain, and by an almost superhuman effort shook himself free from the enraged man.

Louis dropped to the bottom of the cell with a wild laugh, while the priest raved at him, but was careful to keep at a safe distance from the opening. He swore that his prisoner should not have another mouthful of food nor a drop of water. He tied his handkerchief around his bleeding arm, and with muttered oaths left the cell.

The excitement raised Louis' spirits, and he suffered less during the night than usual. But evening brought him no supper, and when dawn came, fierce hunger came with it, but no food to satisfy these cravings of his appetite. The crampings and burnings returned with double force. Through the long hours of that day, he lay in his cell drawn up in a knot. Toward evening a fever began to creep through his veins. The internal pains ceased somewhat, but his flesh was hot, his veins swollen, and his head nearly bursting. A fierce thirst, also seized him, and his mouth and tongue were dry and parched.

It was late in the night that he was lying fully conscious, trying to hope that help would come.

If it did not come to-night, he felt that it would come too late. In that event he wanted to gain his consent to die with all his plans unaccomplished.

He heard a movement above him, and opening his eyes, saw a faint light. Then he heard a voice calling his name. He started on his elbow, and cried feebly :

“Who are you?”

“John, ’ came from above.

“I am dying, John, and for heaven’s sake do not desert me now.”

“Be calm. I do not think you are dying, and I shall not desert you. But we must use caution or we may be discovered ; then I shall be in as bad a box as you are.” While he spoke he arranged a small lantern so as to throw the light full on the trap-door.

“Be patient now till I get this everlasting door open.”

He began working vigorously with a large file on the staple that held the main bar. It was no light job, and full two hours were gone before his task was accomplished. He hurriedly slipped the bolt and threw open the door.

“Let me have your hands and I will draw you out,” he said.

Louis made an effort to comply with this request, but the exertion and excitement together were too much for him and he fainted. John looked at him for several minutes and then hurriedly left the house. He soon returned with a small bucket of water and

some bread. Louis had regained consciousness and he seized the bucket and drank as if he were perishing from thirst. John gave him some bread which he devoured ravenously.

“We will try it again,” said John.

With the greatest difficulty, Louis was finally raised out of his cell. After eating and drinking he felt stronger, and yet he could walk only with the assistance of his friend. They moved slowly step by step, and after a weary time they reached the outer door.

“I must rest a moment,” said Louis. “But thank God that I once more breathe the pure air of heaven.”

“Eat this bread while you rest, and I will reconnoiter,” said John.

He looked up and down the street with great care, and satisfied himself that no one was near. The night was dark and it was difficult to see an object at any distance.

He came back to Louis and said: “If we can only escape a stray watch, I think we are safe. Can you go now?”

“Yes.”

They moved on slowly and painfully. Louis could scarcely drag one foot after the other. Starvation and fever had paralyzed his strong frame, and he was as weak as a child. But he had naturally a splendid constitution to combat the ravages of disease. Louis got too weak to walk and then John carried him, and when he was too

tired to bear his burden further, the poor fellow would creep along the best he could. Thus wore away the night in a bitter struggle to gain a place of shelter.

At last, in the suburbs of the city, they reached a small house. Day was already breaking. John knocked at the door, and in response came :

“Who is there?”

John answered by a low whistle, and the door swung open.

“Here is our man,” said John ; “give him a bed quick.”

The man was rough and bearded, but he looked at Louis compassionately as he led the way to a garret room.

In this garret was a comfortable bed and Louis stretched himself on it with a sigh of relief. To his worn body it was luxurious.

John said : “I must get back, it is growing late. Take good care of Langford, and I’ll warn you if danger threatens. Good-bye,” and he hurried away, but not so fast that he did not hear a “God bless you,” from Louis.

CHAPTER XXII.

DISAPPOINTMENT.

When Earnest reached his room he found Gerould still sitting up awaiting his return. As he entered the door he was greeted with: "Halloo, old boy, your are rather late to-night."

This was said with an attempt at his old gay manner, but in reality his smile was only a ghost of its former self, and his voice had in it a tremor of pain.

The change in his room-mate had a startling effect on Earnest. He was very pale and had a haggared look. His effort at gayety was the veriest sham, but still it had that in it which touched the deepest sympathy of Earnest's heart.

He closed the door, came up to him, and laying his hand on his shoulder, said: "Tell me, Gerould, old friend, tell me what has gone wrong."

"Gone wrong," cried Gerould, "gone wrong, indeed. Ha, ha, that is rich. Why, I'm right side up with care,—see," and he threw himself back in his chair, and laughed violently, but there was a vibration in his laugh, which was not of pleasure. But he suddenly sprang to his feet and said: "We had a splendid open session—a magnificent success. I tell you, old fellow, you car-

ried off the palm, you covered yourself with glory—I am proud of you. I shall say to the future generation of Wingroves: ‘Earnest Leighton; why to be sure I knew him. Bless my soul! I not only knew him, but I roomed with him. He was my bosom friend; yes sir, I am proud of him.’”

During this little speech Gerould did not look at Earnest, but seemed to be addressing the boot-jack that was hanging up in one corner of the room. He was just on the eve of starting off again, when Earnest said: “Be quiet for a little while, I have something to tell you.”

“With unbounded pleasure,” is rejoined. “Allow me to congratulate you on the unusual circumstance of your having something to say,” and Gerould re-seated himself, leaning back in his chair, placing his feet on the table.

Earnest moved his chair very near and said abruptly: “Miss Langford returns to New York in a few days.”

“The dickens,” exclaimed Gerould, with a sudden start that came near overturning the table.

“Yes, she is going.”

There was a brief silence, then Gerould said, in a low, changed tone: “Why?”

“I don’t know.”

Both of these men felt that they should be confidential with each other, yet it was difficult to break a silence that had existed so long between them.

“When?” said Gerould, shading his face with his hand and tightly compressing his lips.

“Next week early.”

Gerould rose and walked slowly across the room with his hands behind him and his head bowed; he paused at the window and placing his foot on the sill, silently gazed out at the night.

“Gerould,” said Earnest.

He slowly came back and took his seat with a dejected air, and only answered: “Well, old fellow.”

The bright, handsome face was clouded now, and bore the marks of a painful struggle.

Earnest hesitated, for he felt at a loss for words to express himself, but at last he managed to say:

“Gerould, we are both in trouble; shall we mutually confide in each other?”

“You are about right, old boy, I need a tonic of some kind, and possibly an honest confession would answer every purpose.”

Earnest bowed his head upon the table and remained for a long while in thought, then raising it he said:

“My best friend, I can not say what I wish to. I do not understand myself. I am confused and lost, utterly bewildered. I love Marabel Langford with a desperate, hopeless love. I have been so imprudent as to tell her of my attachment.” Then, after reflecting a moment he continued: “Is a man to blame for such an imprudence? Is it in the possibilities of human nature to gaze into the eyes of one to whom you are devoted, and never speak an unguarded word? The feeling gets pos-

session of a man, and controls him. It trembles in every fibre of his being, it struggles for mastery, it always conquers. My resolutions were good, but they failed me. My judgment was correct, but my will proved too weak. This has been a delightful day to me, but it is the peace and quiet that precedes the storm. I am miserable to-night. Yes, I told her that I loved her, and the moment was a happy one. But since I come to reflect, she gave me no positive assurance of her love in return. But she placed me under the bond of a promise—a promise to visit her in New York during the month of February. I thought my fetters were silken then, but a short hour has told me that they are cruel steel. I do not want to go to the metropolis now. I have interests there to look after, but not yet.”

There was another pause, then Earnest rose and stood close to his friend; his face was pale to his very lips, and a deep, pained look was in his large dark eyes, as he said:

“Gerould, one short hour ago I believed Marabel Langford to be an angel, and now I think her a willing tool to a fiendish priest.”

“My old chum,” said Gerould, in an unusually quiet tone for him, “you are very much excited; Miss Langford is a true woman, or there is not one on the face of the earth.”

“I fear there are none, then,” said Earnest bitterly.

“Do not talk that way, old fellow, you are no misanthrope.”

"No, I am not, but I fear all the goodness of the world is not centred in my idol."

"There are few better women, Earnest Leighton, and you misjudge her," said Gerould with remarkable positiveness.

"Can you fathom the motive of this sudden visit to New York, to be followed so soon by your humble servant?"

"No I can not, but I am sure the motive is good, for the woman is true."

"What a bundle of credulity my wise friend has come to be," said Earnest.

Gerould did not reply to this remark, but said, in a low tone :

"Earnest, sincerely, do you think Miss Langford would favor your suit or not?"

"When I left her house I thought she would, but my impression now is that she cares nothing about me. I honestly believe she is a stool-pigeon to beguile me to New York."

"Then you will not go?"

"Yes, I will. I shall never break a promise I have made in good faith. But I shall try to be as wise as a serpent, if not as harmless as a dove." He continued in a tone that had in it more of sadness than bitterness, as he laid his hand on his friend's shoulder: "Gerould, I know that you admire Miss Langford; consider me out of the field, and do your best to win her. I can never, and will never marry a Catholic, though I idolized her. And yet this woman is continually making

me act the fool. But women are always doing that with men. I heartily wish you would marry her, for I shall never entirely be myself until she is absolutely beyond my reach. But," he added with that quizzical smile on his lips, "I am most certainly entangled. I must find some honorable way of escape from the leashes she has thrown around me. If I only had back my promise to go to New York, and a few other immature utterances, I should be comparatively happy."

"I wish I were in your place, my heart-stricken boy," said Gerould, with a slight shrug of his shoulders.

Here the conversation dropped for the night and they both retired to woo, in vain, the tranquillity of slumber.

* * * * *

It was on the next evening that Gerould sought an interview with Miss Langford. The interview was granted. The quiet of night had scarcely stolen over the city before they met. In his impatience Gerould had called early.

He drew his chair near hers, and leaning his head on his hand, said in an uncertain voice: "You are going away?"

"Yes."

"Will you return soon?"

"No; possibly never."

An embarrassing pause, in which the woman's color is high, and the man is pale.

Then, suddenly: "Do you know what it is to love with all of one's strength?"

"Yes," came from her lips in scarcely an audible whisper, and her color deepened.

"What is life worth when such a love becomes dead to one?" he asked with a wistful gaze that seemed to be staring into a hopeless future.

"Life is always worth much if it is bravely lived," she said, in a half musing way, as if she were walking again along the pathway of her own experiences. "Love is very much, but God is more. The loss of love and the separations of life are inevitable, but the presence of God may overshadow every soul and be an ever-present help."

"I suppose I have never been a very religious man, for you are the only being I have ever worshiped; tell me frankly, may I still adore my idol?"

She leaned forward in her womanly tenderness, and said: "I am so sorry, Mr. Wingrove, that you told me this. I admire you very, very much, but I can never love you as the woman should love the man to whom she entrusts her happiness."

"Then you love another," he said in a broken tone.

She was silent.

But he persisted: "If you love no other there may yet be hope for me."

"There is no hope," she rejoined sadly.

"I am sure, then, your heart is not free."

"We all have our heart troubles, Mr. Wingrove, and sometimes they are very, very bitter; I have not been more fortunate than you," And her

proud, beautiful head lost its stately poise as the tear-drops silently stole between her white fingers.

“Do not weep, Miss Langford, I am unworthy of your regard, unworthy of the tears you are shedding now. Forget me, forget the love I have for you. I am going away to battle with my love, after awhile, perchance to conquer—through the help of your God. I want you always to remember me as a friend. I shall always cherish your memory. You shall be an inspiration to my life—a blessed inspiration. And if my wishes were realities, how happy you would be! May God bless you. Good-bye.”

He seized her hand and passionately kissed it; then he was gone, and she was left alone.

CHAPTER XXIII.

CONSULTATION.

It was the last day of January, 1845. The clouds hung low, and the rain was constantly falling, but it froze as fast as it fell. It was a cheerless day, full of sleet, full of sadness. There were not many people abroad in the streets of New York. Those that were forced to brave the storm were wrapped and muffled, and they moved along at a dreary pace.

Father Mallory was out in the storm, but he seemed indifferent to both the dampness and chill. He was in high glee, as he would occasionally rub his hands together and chuckle to himself. He finally reached the residence of Robert Manning, and without a moment's hesitation he ascended the steps and rang the bell. He was immediately admitted by a servant, who relieved him of his wet wrappings, and at once conducted him into the presence of the master of the house.

The last thirteen years had left their trace in furrow and cord on the brow of Father Manning. It was the same uncommunicative face, but it had, in addition, the expression of a silent chapter of suffering. There was something about this man that would win your sympathies, regardless of the character of his actions. You felt that he was driven

to many things by the force of circumstances, and the protest of his conscience was his unuttered apology.

A visible shudder passed over him as Mallory entered the room. The priest observed it and was delighted.

Manning arose, and pointed his visitor to a seat on the opposite side of the table, as he briefly remarked: "A gloomy day."

Wretched," said Mallory, "but business is fair; I feel much more cheerful than the weather looks. Everything working nicely—Louis Langford juggled; Marabel under my thumb; Angelica prostrated and harmless; Earnest Leighton en-route to enjoy my tender embrace—ha, ha, the weather is nothing." The hideous gleam of triumph made this man's ugly countenance more revolting.

The keen eyes of Mallory were on the face of Robert Manning, but the latter was silent, though his nether lip slightly trembled.

"You see," continued Mallory, "if I once get possession of that young heretic I will turn his whole wealth into the coffers of the church. I see no possible chance of failure now. In ten days he will be here, and I shall welcome him with joy.

Robert Manning raised his eyes, and bent their cold, steel look on his visitor as he said: "I gave you a caution which I shall now express in the language of warning. Earnest Leighton is not to be harmed in life or person. Your machinations must fail if they involve severe, physical suffering.

If you can accomplish your purposes by adroit means, which are comparatively harmless, I have no objections. The property should be in possession of the church, but the purchase price must not be blood. I fear your actions have had a serious effect on the health of Sister Angelica. I must interdict everything that is likely to excite unfavorable symptoms in her case. Beyond this I am willing to leave the details of the whole affair to your judgment, for you are eminently qualified to fill this peculiar field of diplomacy."

The thin lips of Father Manning curled with something akin to a sneer as he uttered the last sentence.

Mallory's eyes flashed as he replied in his short, abrupt way: "My life is consecrated to the church. I am her devoted lover. I know nothing but to work for her interest. She needs money in New York. Money is within her grasp. A bold stroke will secure more than a million. Half work is failure and ruin. I will do nothing that I can not do safely. I will not undertake this business with my hands tied. I have brought it so far successfully, but I will not move another peg with your restrictions hanging over me."

Mallory began walking the floor, an image of low wrath and vulgar cunning. The chiseled face of Robert Manning betrayed no emotion. He bowed his head on his thin, white hand, and thought for a moment.

Then he said: "How much latitude do you wish?"

“Unbounded!”

“That you shall never have.”

Then after a brief silence added: “If Father Mallory has no further business with me, other duties will claim my attention.”

Mallory was surprised by the firmness of his host. He had clearly overstated the importance of his services in the eye of his superior. In his indignation he blurted forth: “The responsibility of failure must rest on your head.”

“Be it so,” was replied in the same calm tone.

Mallory re-seated himself as soon as he could control his wrath. His fingers were working nervously, and there was a hateful gleam in his little round eyes. But when he finally spoke, it was with entire command of his feelings, so far as outward appearances were concerned. Indeed there was a pleading in his voice, which indicated a willingness to conciliate.

He said: “I have no desire seriously to injure Earnest Leighton. It may be necessary to send him to Europe against his will, but I shall use no harsh treatment. You very well know that the success of our enterprise depends on keeping this same Earnest from making his appearance in New York a free man. We must control him—keep him from sight. My policy is this: Capture Earnest as soon as he sets foot in the city, ship him at once to Rome and keep him there as long as is necessary to our purposes. A very small portion of his rental will defray all expenses, and keep him like a

prince after he reaches the Eternal City. Very little violence is necessary to carry out this plan. And after we are rid of the brother we want all the property to pass legally into the hands of the remaining heir; the seal of death is already stamped on her countenance, and I will be responsible for the sort of will she makes. The only suffering your nephew will have to endure is the loss of liberty. Now, will Father Manning give his sanction to these measures?"

"Suppose you should fail in the capture?"

Then no one would be wiser for the plot. But I shall not fail. *I* never fail," and a malicious grin was on the lips of Mallory.

"Ah, I forgot that you were not sufficiently human to be chargeable with so natural a weakness."

Mallory brought his fist down on the table with considerable violence, as he replied, impulsively: "You know I have always succeeded. It is because I work day and night for success. I never sleep, I never tire, while there is a chance for defeat. I will be victorious now, if you will give your sanction to my policy."

Father Manning walked to the window and gazed out at the cheerless clouds as they poured their rain-drops in dreary music against the panes. Images of other days were coming up before his mind and softening his heart. The melancholy shadows of many bitter experiences were resting on his soul, and he was trying to look out beyond

them to where the sun-light bathed the mountain tops with its gleams of hope.

With bowed head he came to the mantel-piece and, leaning upon it, sought comfort from the bright fire that was burning upon the hearth-stone. The red coals assumed a thousand fantastic shapes under the power of his imagination. There were pictures from realities of life, gleaming like burnished gold before his vision. There were monuments all along his past existence fashioned by the genius of his fancy. He recalled his mother, with her every word of endearment and her heavenly smile. All that was good in his soul swelled up for utterance, under the pressure of his fond recollection. But there came before him in awful procession all the teachings of his father. He could behold himself again, as he stood in the presence of that stern parent and swore eternal fealty to the Church of Rome—swore that no human affection should stand between him and the interest of her, his holy mother.

He suddenly turned to Father Mallory and said, without a change in the expression of his face: "I leave the whole matter with you, only do no unnecessary violence." The eye, the lip, the whole contour of the face remained unaltered, but there was a strain of infinite sadness in his voice.

Mallory's face shone with every manifestation of low triumph. It actually gleamed with fiendish delight as he looked forward to his future success, and the reward that would likely follow it.

Without a single word of reply, save a contemptible chuckle, he bowed to his host and moved toward the door.

"Hold a moment!" exclaimed Robert Manning
"When did you last see Sister Angelica?"

"Yesterday."

"How was she?"

"Some better."

"Do you think her dangerously sick?"

"Possibly."

"The case is not hopeless?"

"There is hope as long as there is life."

"That is all," said Robert Manning, as he turned toward the fire.

Mallory passed out into the storm.

Robert Manning rang the bell, and when the servant appeared ordered his carriage. He stood in silence until he heard the wheels grating on the pavement in front of the house, then wrapping himself in a great coat, went forth. He ordered the coachman to drive to the Convent of St. Mary, stepped into the carriage, and was whirled away in the rain and sleet. The invalid girl was to receive a visit from the Catholic bishop.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE INVALID.

In the Convent of St. Mary was a small room comfortably furnished. A bed was drawn out from the wall and on it lay a young woman, pale and motionless. The long, dark lashes were dropped over the eyes and the white hands were folded across the breast. It was a fair face that disease had worn away.

The lips began to tremble, and an expression of pain swept over her features as she started up with a cough.

A dark dressed nun was sitting by the bedside, and she held the frail form while it was torn in the paroxysm of coughing. A wild terror was in her eye and a fatal red spot was on her lip. At last the cruel phlegm was wrenched loose, and she lay back again quiet, but whiter than the sheet of her bed.

"I have slept a little," she whispered.

"A very little," the nun replied.

"I am so worn and so weary," she said with a sigh, and she clasped her hands as if in silent supplication.

The nun made no reply, but sat counting her rosary.

“How late is it?” asked the sick girl.

“About 10 o’clock.”

“Draw the blinds and let the sun shine in once more.”

The nun opened the blinds, and the sun shone full into the room. The rays fell across the bed, and she would lay her hands in them to feel their warmth.

“How blessed is the sunshine,” she said.

“It is the gift of God,” said the nun, “and we should all be thankful.”

“But we can not all enjoy God’s gifts. I am dying because I could not have the sunshine that He has intended we all should enjoy.”

“I fear you are ungrateful for the blessings that God has given you.”

She clasped her hands and gazed wistfully upwards. In a moment she said: “I am grateful to God. He is always kind, but some of his creatures are cruel—very cruel.”

“I do not think you are in a good frame of mind to be so sick. You should forgive every one,” said the nun, piously.

“I do forgive every one, but I am not grateful for that which I know to be cruelty.” She closed her eyes, as she sighed: “I am so weary, so weary!”

After the Superior had locked Sister Angelica in her cell, she became uneasy about her. She fought for more than an hour against this restless feeling, but at last she yielded so far as to send a

nun to the cell. The nun hurried back with frightened face, unable to give any satisfactory account of Angelica. The Superior hastened to the room, only to find the table on which her head rested stained with blood, and the poor girl herself in a state of unconsciousness.

She quickly sent for the physician of the convent, and had Sister Angelica immediately moved to a more comfortable apartment. The Superior was not free from a troublesome conscience, so she suffered keen anxiety before the doctor arrived. She reproached herself bitterly for punishing Sister Angelica, when she knew all too well how feeble was her health.

The doctor came, and when he had made an examination of the invalid, he took the Superior aside, and said:

“I do not understand this case. The hemorrhage is very distinct, but there seems to be something unusual acting as an excitant. Has she recently been greatly exposed?”

The woman told of the attempted escape and of the subsequent re-capture. She dwelt with especial stress upon the necessary excitement attending such an effort. She made no mention of the lone cell in which the broken-hearted girl had been placed. The rack of torture was well kept from sight. From a kind of instinct, she determined to shield herself, although she knew there was nothing to fear from the doctor. He never betrayed the secrets of the convent. But her feelings were

sufficiently aroused to cause her to put forth her best efforts to relieve Sister Angelica.

The doctor went again to the bedside and felt, for a long while, the patient's pulse.

"Bad pulse!" he muttered.

He left some simple remedies and went away, promising to return soon. The Superior met him in the hall and asked what was the matter with Sister Angelica.

"Consumption," he said, "superinduced by exposure and hardship."

"She has not been treated badly, doctor," she said with evident concern.

"The case speaks for itself," he replied brusquely, and was gone.

He came again next morning, and indeed, every morning found the doctor by the side of his new patient. He had taken a strange fancy to this sick girl, and seemed determined to exhaust his medical skill in trying to cure her. He had given positive orders that her mind should be kept as tranquil as possible, and, in order to insure this, he wished her every whim gratified.

A few days after the morning on which she asked that the window should be opened, she called the nun to the bed-side, and said:

"Will you not get the Bible and read to me?"

"I will read to you from the Prayer Book," the nun said hesitatingly.

"No, no," she said with a sick person's impatience, "I want the Bible."

“I will speak to the Mother Superior.”

She sought the Superior and brought her to the invalid, saying simply: “She wants the Bible read.”

“I will send for a priest,” said the Superior kindly.

“I do not want a priest,” the invalid replied impatiently, “I want to hear the Bible read only. I can trust the Bible, but I can not trust your priest. Oh, why will you not read it to me!” and she tossed her hands about excitedly as she moaned out her complaint.

“Let me read to you from the Psalter or the Breviary?” entreated the Superior.

“I am so sick, I think you might read to me from the Bible.”

At this moment the doctor entered, and as soon as he looked at Sister Angelica, he asked abruptly: “What has excited her?”

The Superior beckoned him to the opposite side of the room, and said in a low tone:

“She wants us to read the Bible to her.”

“Read it then,” said the doctor positively.

“But I can not, it is contrary to the canons of the church.”

“The canons of the church be hanged! if you excite that poor girl, I can not save her. Pay more attention to her body and less to her soul if you wish to do either any good.”

“I can not disobey my church. The Council of Toulouse says: ‘We also prohibit the laity to

have the books of the Old Testament, or the New, unless, perhaps, some might desire for devotion to have the Psalter or the Breviary for the divine offices, or the Hours to the blessed Mary. But we most strictly forbid them to have the books translated into the vulgar tongue.' I can not depart from these instructions, but I am willing to send for a priest."

"A priest will do no good."

"I will not yield without consulting one."

"Then you will kill the poor girl," said the doctor savagely. He administered a quieting potion and left the house with a gloomy face.

That evening Father Mallory called at the convent, and held a consultation with the Superior. He was furious when he learned that Sister Angelica had been taken from the cell to another apartment in order to make her more comfortable.

"It is all a sham," he exclaimed violently, "that she may not be punished as her sins demand. I should have kept her in the cell. If she wanted to be contrary and die, why, let her die. It would have been no fault of yours. Once let her kind know that they can manage you, and there is no end to their tricks, but there is an immediate end to all discipline. We punish for the benefit of the soul, and to be salutary it must be severe. You did wrong in letting this girl escape you so easy."

"But she was very sick, dangerously sick," said the Superior, who was sensitive of Mallory's opinion.

“Pshaw! all put on! I have watched that woman, she seems to be fair and gentle, but she is as sturbborn as a mule. You ought to break that stubbornness if it kills her. It will have a good effect on other unruly characters that may be under your charge. I insist on having her put back in the cell.”

“I believe it would kill her, Father Mallory,” said the Superior earnestly.

“Say rather that she might die, because it would spite us. I do not believe she is half as sick as she makes out to be, but let her go this time. But, I’ll tell you, I am scorching that rascally priest who tried to get her away.”

At this point in the conversation Bishop Manning was announced, and Mallory took his departure. He received a gracious welcome from the Superior. The bishop talked about the general welfare of the convent, before he alluded to the subject that lay nearest his heart. But at last he asked directly about Sister Angelica, and expressed his wish to see her.

When they entered the room, Sister Angelica was quietly sleeping, and the Superior wished to arouse her, but the bishop said: “Oh, no, let her rest, I will wait till she awakes.”

And he sat by the bed and looked at the tranquil features that were now in repose. As he looked, there seemed to come over him a mystic spell, woven from the scattered threads of the past. He saw a fine looking man in the full vigor of life, and

a beautiful woman with the light of love in her eyes. They were in their own house, in the possession of happiness and abundance. They had children that were loved. He saw this couple stricken down and the children left in orphanage. The whole scene of agony came up before him, that was enacted on that dark and awful night. There came the silent procession of death that bore the long sleepers to their couches in the cemetery.

There were two children! he had not forgotten them. They were cruelly torn apart and lost to each other. One of them was buried away in a convent, the other was roaming, he knew not where. This silent man, with his clear-cut, secret face, was reproaching himself in this moment of retrospect. It would not last long, but it was intense while it did last. There was something in the face before him that called up these thoughts that he had tried so hard to bury.

Angelica opened her eyes and gazed at the bishop wonderingly.

He came near the bed, took her by the hand, and asked gently: "How do you feel now, my poor girl?"

"Better," she said languidly.

There was something like compassion, came into his cold gray eyes as he looked on that frail form.

"How much like her mother," he murmured to himself. "The same spiritual beauty, the same fine mouth, the same deep blue eyes. Poor girl!

if your mother could have lived, how tenderly she would have cared for you!"

Then to the sick girl: "Is there anything you want? Can I do anything for you?"

She looked at him long and silently, as if she were trying to study the face—trying to see if there was anything tender in it.

"Yes," she said, "you can do much for me if you will."

"What can I do, my good girl?"

"Give me that for which my heart is breaking, my liberty, and the right to die in the faith of my mother."

"But you are too weak to leave here now," he said with a chill about his heart.

"Give me your sacred promise that I may go when I am strong enough, and how fast I shall improve. What I need is the free air of heaven."

"Do they not treat you well?" he asked evasively.

"I have no complaint to make of the treatment beyond the imprisonment. I want to be as other girls who go and come as they like."

"I am sure you have kind and attentive friends here."

The woman shook her head, but said only: "Possibly you do not know all that one suffers."

"I do not think you should wish to leave the convent."

She spoke with a nervous energy that surprised the bishop:

“I am not a Catholic, I do not believe what you teach. I am only a prisoner here. If I believed it were right to consecrate my life as you say, I should do so without a murmur. But it is against the best feelings of my heart; it is repulsive to every conviction I have, and I am no better than a chained slave here. You bind me hand and foot, and then you try to take away my soul-freedom. Every day I am forced to witness solemn rites that I do not believe to be worship. I am so weary of this hollow life I am leading, and I want to go away from this place and be the girl that God intended I should be. Besides, somewhere in this great world, I have a brother, if he is not buried from sight. Why can not I see him? What has either of us done that we should be separated these long years? Do you tell me that this, too, is a part of your worship? My brother would care for me, if he were here. I remember when I cried every day because he was not with me, and I pleaded piteously for him, but it was all unavailing. You are a man of authority, and by your influence, I may be free. Will you not listen to the prayer of a dying girl? Think of all I have suffered, left in lonely orphanage, robbed of my only brother, held in weary imprisonment, forced to conform to a religious worship, which my soul abhors. Oh, sir, if you have any sympathy, please let me go away. Every night and morning I'll pray the good God to bless you.”

She sank back weak and helpless; the effort had

been too much for her. The bishop's face hid the contending emotions of his heart. The sick girl had strangely disturbed him. He sat in silent thought for a long while, as if trying to escape some unpleasant duty. Then he arose, went close to the bed, took up the white, slender hand of the invalid, and said in a low earnest, voice :

“Be of good cheer, all will yet end well.”

He turned and left the room. The sympathy of the man was fiercely struggling with the policy of the priest. The pale face unnerved him, and he wanted to escape its influence that he might think more calmly. He was fearful that this invalid would force from him promises that he would afterwards regret. He called the Superior before he left the house, and, handing her a purse, said :

“Spare no expense to make Sister Angelica comfortable. I'll try to come again.”

The bishop left behind him in the sick room, a ray of hope. And that hope gave the sick girl strength, and she slowly improved.

*

CHAPTER XXV.

THE BROTHER AND SISTER.

A few evenings after Robert Manning's visit to Sister Angelica, just as dark was coming on, John cautiously stole to the house that had given shelter to Louis Langford. Under the better treatment of his rough friend, Louis had rapidly gained strength. He felt equal now to the ordinary emergencies of life, though he was still lean and haggard.

John told him in his own quiet way that his sister Marabel had returned to New York, and if he wished to accomplish anything, now was the time for action. There was one serious difficulty in the way of an immediate movement. How could they approach Marabel without being observed? It was important that no mistake should be made here. They held a long council that night and the next evening they acted, but they acted on information obtained by John on that day.

Louis gained access to Marabel, and John remained without the house to guard against any surprise.

When Marabel met her brother she was deeply distressed at his appearance. His painful suffer-

ings had left a permanent impression on his manly face. But when he assured her how much he had improved since his escape from prison, her indignation knew no bounds against his enemies.

Louis lost no time, but began at once to talk to his sister of the business in hand. He told of his own imprisonment, of the escape and recapture of Sister Angelica. He dwelt with especial fullness when he spoke of the invalid girl, and his sister caught his enthusiasm when he told of Angelica's simple faith, and her unconquerable repugnance to Catholicism.

"There are some strange points in her history," he said. "The very fact that she is so unalterably fixed in her religious belief, leads me to the conclusion that she must have had very strong Protestant antecedents. She also remembers a home of luxury, where she had an only brother who was afterwards separated from her. The many proofs that she belongs to a refined and cultivated family, raised in my mind a suspicion which has deepened into conviction, that Sister Angelica and Rena Leighton are one and the same. I have thought this for sometime, but I have scarcely a doubt of it now. If it is within human power, I shall take her out of the convent and give her the freedom for which she has so long sighed. But first tell me all about the cause of your return and the object of your visit to Lexington."

Marabel told him in detail all the incidents with which she was connected while she was gone.

The key to the whole mystery was found in Earnest's property, which they so earnestly coveted. She closed the narrative with the fact that Earnest would soon follow her to the city.

"You did not fathom the object of this visit?" he asked.

"No."

Louis then laid before his sister the plans of the priests as he had received them from John. Then he said :

"I am firmly determined to sever my connection with the Catholic Church."

His sister gave an exclamation of surprise at this announcement.

"Do not be astonished at what I tell you. I suppose I have no choice in the matter as the church has already excommunicated me. But my whole nature is now in arms against this hierarchy. It was with reluctance that I ever consented to discharge the duties of a priest, and then it was under the influence of misrepresentation. I always held the confessional in distrust, and I only yielded my objections through the influence of the allurements that were thrown around the worship by Brother Benedict. A larger experience proves that I was deceived, and it becomes my solemn duty to reform my life, at least, till I bring it in harmony with my convictions. I have studied the question profoundly for months, and I wish to state briefly to you the reasons I have for changing my faith. The first thing that impressed me keenly, was

our constant violation of the second commandment. My attention was called to this by Sister Angelica. The commandment reads as follows: 'Thou shalt not make unto thyself any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: Thou shall not bow thyself down to them nor serve them.' This is plain, strong language, and every day we are violating it. Our worship abounds in images, and we prostrate ourselves before them. Of course, we say, we do not worship the image, but the ordinary mind does not make such nice distinctions. Besides, we are expressly forbidden to bow ourselves before an image, and this we do in the face of God's prohibition. I shall never again be guilty of this sin."

Marabel asked for his Bible and slowly read the Ten Commandments as found in King James' version. Then she said:

"I have read my Bible often, but I never before noticed this discrepancy. I have never seen a Catechism that contains the Second Commandment. I do not like this."

"But as you know, we are not allowed to read the Bible in the vulgar tongue. If we read at all, it must be the Douay Bible, which translation is made to suit the Catholic Church. I shall give you, my sister, a single illustration of the way in which they wrestle with God's word. There is no authority in the Scriptures for the doctrine of pen-

ance as taught by Rome. The only support they have for this dogma is to be found in a false translation of the Bible. I have made out this tabular statement that will show you at once the force of my assertion." He handed her a slip of paper, containing the following :

	DOUAY VERSION.*	VERSION OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND.
Matt. xi: 2.	Do penance	Repent ye.
" iv: 17.	Do penance.	Repent.
" xi: 20.	They had not done penance	They repented not.
" xii: 41.	Because they did penance	Because they repented.
Mark vi: 12.	That they should do penance.	That men should repent.
Luke xiii: 3.	Unless you do penance.	Except ye repent.
" xv: 7.	One sinner that doth penance.	One sinner that repenteth.
" xvi: 30.	They will do penance.	They will repent.
" xvii: 3.	If he do penance.	If he repent.
Acts ii: 38.	Do penance.	Repent.
" xvii: 30.	Do penance.	Repent.
2 Cor. xii: 21.	Who have not done penance.	Who have not repented.

"When a doctrine must be supported by such questionable methods as these, I wish the liberty to renounce it. You, my sister, understand Greek, and you may consult the original at your leisure. It will sustain all I have said.

When I began the study of theology there was one statement of my teacher that had a powerful fascination for my mind, but which has since become a great stumbling block. I refer to the proud claim of Rome to be the mother of us all. To belong to the original church, to be connected with the very fountain and source of our faith, is something for which one should congratulate himself. It is no small boast to be the mother church. But children are taught in the language of their mothers, and in that language they speak. For instance: 'That the

*The History of the Confessional.

Hebrew is a more ancient language than the Greek, and the Greek than the Roman, need to be stated only for a few. One proof of this fact is, that the Hebrew has given many words to the Greek, while the Greek has given none to the Hebrew ; so the Greek has given many words to the Latin, while the Latin has given none to the Greek. Thus we prove the Roman Church to have come out of the bosom of the Greek, from the fact, that all the leading ecclesiastical terms in the Roman Church are Greek. For example : "pope," "patriarch," "synod," "ecclesiastic," "schism," "schismatic," "heresy," "heretic," "catechumen," "hierarchy," "church," "exorcism," "presbytery," "mystery," "catholic," "canon," etc. All these are Greek words, and we are constrained to ask why Rome departed from her own vernacular, when, in her more mature years, she has developed such a fondness for the Latin tongue? The answer is, that in the early church the Greeks preponderated over the Latins, as is clearly proved by the number of Greeks represented in the early councils, and from the fact also, that the first church historians were Greeks. Pursuing this line of argument, I am persuaded that Rome is not my mother, nay, not even my step-mother, and I do not intend to be forced or cheated into recognizing her authority.

But there is nothing in the doctrines of the church that is more objectionable than the profession. My whole soul abhors it. It is a

priest the vicegerent of Christ, and gives him power to retain or remit sins. It makes the validity of his action depend, not upon his words, but upon his intention. The everlasting welfare of a human soul rests upon the act of a man with all his bitter hates and his uncompromising prejudices. Through the agency of the confessional, the priest wields a fearful influence over the minds of his congregation. In the name of religion, he pries into every secret of the heart; then these secrets become to him sources of immense power.

It is one of their uniform customs to get possession of the children and drill them in the doctrines of the church. One can scarcely resist the influence of perpetual teaching. My nature was in rebellion against many doctrines of the Catholic Church, still a shrewd monk placed before me her fairest tenets and won my consent to accept those that were the most deformed. But I know enough now to force me to renounce every allegiance to a church that is resolved on conquest, whatever the cost may be. But my determination to be rid of the church, has not forestalled its determination to be rid of me."

He took from his pocket a newspaper and said: "If you wish you may read my excommunication. It was published two days since at the instigation of Father Mallory."

She read slowly and with deepening horror, the following curse:

"By the authority of God Almighty, the Father,

Son and Holy Ghost, and the undefiled Virgin Mary, Mother and patroness of our Savior, and of all celestials, virtues, Angels, Archangels, Thrones, Dominions, Powers, Cherubims and Seraphims; and of all the Holy Patriarchs, Prophets, and of all the Apostles and Evangelists of the Holy Innocents, who, in the sight of the Holy Lamb are found worthy to sing the new song of the Holy Martyrs and Holy Confessors, and of all the Holy Virgins and of all Saints, together with the Holy Elect of God—may he, Louis Langford, be damned. We excommunicate and anathematize him, and from the threshold of the Holy Church of God Almighty, we sequester him, that he may be tormented, disposed and be delivered over with Dathan and 'Abiram, and with those who say unto the Lord: 'Depart from us, for we desire none of thy ways;' as a fire is quenched with water, so let the light of him be put out forever more, unless it shall repent him, and make satisfaction. Amen! May the Father, who created man, curse him! May the Son, who suffered for us, curse him! May the Holy Ghost, who suffered for us in baptism, curse him! May the Holy Cross, which Christ for our salvation, triumphing over his enemies, ascended, curse him! May the Holy and Eternal Virgin Mary, Mother of God, curse him! May St. Michael, the Advocate of the Holy Souls, curse him! May all the angels, principalities and powers, and all the heavenly armies, curse him! May the praise-worthy multitude of Patriarchs,

and Prophets, curse him ! May St. John the Precursor, and St. John the Baptist, and St. Peter, and St. Paul, and St. Andrew, and all others of Christ's Apostles together, curse him ! And may the rest of our Disciples and Evangelists, who by their preaching converted the universe, and the holy and wonderful company of Martyrs and Confessors, who by their holy works are found pleasing to God Almighty ; may the holy choir of the Holy Virgins, who for the honor of Christ have despised the things of the world, damn him ! May all the saints from the beginning of the world to everlasting ages, who are found to be beloved of God, damn him ! May he be damned wherever he be, whether in the house or in the stable, the garden or the field, or the highways ; or in the woods, or in the waters, or in the church ; may he be cursed in living or in dying ! May he be cursed in eating and in drinking, in being hungry, in being thirsty, in fasting, in sleeping, in slumbering and in sitting, in living, in working, in resting and blood letting ! May he be cursed in all the faculties of his body ! May he be cursed inwardly and outwardly ; may he be cursed in his brains and in his vertex, in his temples, in his eyebrows, in his cheeks, in his jaw bones, in his nostrils, in his teeth, and grinders, in his lips, in his throat, in his shoulders, in his arms, in his fingers.

May he be damned in his mouth, in his breast, in his heart, in his purtenance, down to the very stomach ! May he be cursed in his reins, and in

his groins, in his thighs, and in his hips, and his knees, his legs and feet, and toe-nails! May he be cursed in all his joints, and articulation of the members; from the crown of his head to the sole of his feet, may there be no soundness. May the Son of the living God, with all the glory of his majesty, curse him! And may heaven with all the powers that move therein, rise up against him and curse him and damn him; unless he repent and make satisfaction! Amen. So be it. Be it so. Amen."

When Marabel had finished reading this curse, her face was pale with suppressed feeling, and then came trembling from her lips:

"And this from the church that I have so faithfully served! This to my brother, whom I love better than my life!"

She walked to and fro across the room, her face showing the deep passion that was glowing like a flame in her heart. She suddenly stopped before Louis, threw up her hands in an impulsive way, and exclaimed:

"I hate them all with the undying hatred of a woman who has seen one she loves trampled upon and outraged. I have been fanatical in their worship. I have answered priestly questions that have made my cheeks burn with shame. I have had priests to pry with merciless curiosity into the secret thoughts that a maiden holds so precious. I have been driven from pillar to post in their service. I have seen things that made my very blood run

cold and made me shudder to the center of my heart. I have borne everything because I was infatuated. I have suffered anxiety on your account, because of the cruel hints that were thrown out. And now, if they curse my brother, they shall curse me. If they pour upon his head the vials of their wrath, they shall pour them on mine. If he is not worthy to be a son of the church, I am not worthy to be her daughter. When my brother goes, I shall go; his home shall be my home, and his faith, my faith."

Louis looked with admiration on his proud, imperious sister. And when she ceased speaking, he sprang to his feet and held her close to his heart.

In this great crisis of their lives they understood each other. And a little later, when they separated, they were pledged to carry out the same plan.

All through that night, Marabel called up the past in bitter review, and dreamed with a tremulous joy over the possibilities of the future. When the winter sun stole into her room, her bed was still untouched.

CHAPTER XXVI.

OLD ACQUAINTANCES.

The crown of years was sitting on the head of Mr. Malor. The days of his active ministry were past, and the faithful pastor, in his old age, was enjoying the rich reward of a virtuous and useful life. The young and middle-aged came to him for advice, drawn from his rich experiences, and they were never turned away empty. He was like an ancient patriarch, at whose feet were gathered many children, and over whose heads, with uplifted hands, he was pronouncing a perpetual blessing. Happy is the decline of a life that has been nobly and unselfishly spent.

Dr. Logan, too, bore the traces of the passing years. He was the same impatient, hospitable, noble-hearted old gentleman. His impulses for good were still quick and generous, and he still had an abundant supply of that withering scorn that he most lavishly visited on the iniquitous evil doer. He had long since quitted his practice, save only among a few special friends. Every one loved the doctor, not on account of his irritability, but because of his native goodness of heart. The friendship between himself and Mr. Malor had strengthened with the gathering years. They were

very much together, and often spoke of the experiences of their early lives. And in their retrospective moments it was not unusual for them to recur to their former intimacy with William Leighton. This always ended in a discussion as to the probable whereabouts of his orphan children. The aged minister had an unbroken faith that, in the course of his own life, Earnest and Rena Leighton would be restored to the home of their ancestors. The old doctor was skeptical and impatient. He believed it all to be nonsense. The priestly dogs had long ago made an end of these promising young children. Then he would consign the whole priestly crew to unmentionable localities, with the most imaginative and horrible surroundings.

During the afternoon of the day on which occurred the events narrated in the last chapter, the doctor had called on the minister. The old subject of the Leightons had come up for an unusually warm discussion. Mr. Malor tranquilly re-affirmed his hopeful faith, and Dr. Logan impetuously urged his skepticism.

When the controversy was at its height, a servant appeared bearing a letter for Mr. Malor. It bore the city post-mark. He broke the seal and read the missive with an expression of surprise rapidly gathering in his face. He had scarcely finished, when he thrust it toward Dr. Logan with the exclamation: "It contains news of Earnest Leighton; read!"

The doctor eagerly seized the letter, and, with

trembling hands, adjusted his glasses, in order to read its contents. It ran as follows:

MR. MALOR:

Dear Sir: I have news of Earnest Leighton which will deeply interest you. In order to communicate it I will call at your house this evening at eight o'clock. I wish you to have Dr. Logan present, as he is equally interested. I can not sign my name, as I wish to remain entirely unknown. Besides you two I trust our interview may have no other witnesses. Believe me to be one who is not indifferent to the welfare of William Leighton's children.

The note was unsigned. The two men looked at each other in wonder. At last the doctor blurted out: "It is a deception—a cheat. No signature—no address—the whole thing is gammon."

"But it may not be," said the minister. "I believe it to be genuine. At all events it will not be long till the matter may be thoroughly tested."

"If any one should come, how should we know whether or not to believe him. I am no subject for sharp practice," insisted the incredulous old doctor.

"But remain anyhow," urged the minister good naturedly. "If I am to be duped I wish company, and then you are expressly invited."

The doctor finally consented to be present, though he still declared that they would be victimized.

The hours never pass rapidly when we are anxiously awaiting a time in which there may be a revelation concerning great interests. The afternoon wore slowly away. As darkness came on the

rain and sleet changed into snow, and the storm raged with terrible fury. The clouds hung low, the wind came in whirling eddies, and the snow fell in blinding sheets.

It lacked a few moments till eight o'clock when Dr. Logan walked to the window, and gazed out at the night."

"No one will ever come through such a storm as this," he said.

His words were scarcely spoken when the door bell was rung violently. Presently the door to the library was thrown open, and a woman stood on the threshold of the room. The old doctor stared in amazement as the ejaculation escaped his lips: "A woman, by all that is good."

There was a momentary pause before Mr. Malor sufficiently recovered himself to invite the lady to a seat near the fire. She accepted his invitation with a bow, and moved gracefully toward the proffered chair. She was dressed in deep mourning and wore a heavy black veil that entirely hid her features. No opinion could be framed of her personal appearance, beyond her elegant form and queenly carriage.

The two gentlemen moved mechanically to positions on either side of her; and the minister introduced the conversation by the universal remark, applicable alike to all circumstances and conditions:

"A stormy night, madam."

"Very indeed," was responded, in tones of tremulous music.

The doctor spoke: "We could have forgiven you a disappointment to-night, the weather being inclement."

"But, sir, the disappointment would have been with me—a disappointment I could never bear. Do you know that sometimes a wilder storm rages in our hearts than ever bursts from clouds above us?"

There was a painful intensity in her manner of speaking this. But she went on, talking with increasing excitement that broke her utterances into fragments. "I spoke of the Leightons—I know much about them—they are in deep trouble—they need help—I accidentally learned that you had an interest in them—would be willing to assist them—for the love of heaven do not refuse."

Her small hands were clasped, and she leaned forward in the attitude of pleading. But the heavy veil still covered her face and hid the expression of her features.

The old doctor was deeply interested, and he eagerly asked: "Are you related to the Leightons?"

"No, oh no," she said, "but do not ask me who I am. I can not tell you now. You will know sometime. What I want is help for those who are in danger."

The minister arose and looked down on her with his kindly eyes. The good, gray-haired old man seemed about to pronounce a blessing upon her. And this anxious woman seemed sadly in need of

a blessing from the tranquil spirit before her. But he only said—gently said :

“We are your friends, and friends of Earnest and Rena Leighton if they are alive. Speak to us freely, and as freely will we give you help. There is no power that we possess which we would not cheerfully wield for the benefit of the orphan children of our old friend.”

There came a broken sob from beneath the veil, and the words were heard : “God will bless you.”

The lady recovered herself immediately and went on : “You are aware that for many years Robert Manning, in the interest of the Catholic Church, has been controlling the property of the Leightons. Their first policy was to get the estate into the hands of Earnest, influence him to be a priest, and since a priest can not hold property, the whole of it would have reverted to the church. But Earnest, refusing to become a priest, made his escape, and this necessitated a change of policy. Before stating the second and present plan it is necessary to give two facts : Rena Leighton is in the Convent of St. Mary, but has never been proselyted to the Catholic faith. She is reputed to be in the last stage of consumption. This, however, may be false, though she is certainly in very delicate health. Earnest has been in Kentucky for several years, although his whereabouts was only recently discovered by an agent of Father Mallory. The present policy is as follows : The priests will get Earnest in their power so as to completely control

his actions. They will then adduce sufficient evidence to establish the fact of his death. This being done, the estate will pass to Rena, who is the only remaining heir. But she is in a convent, subject to the manipulations of a wily priesthood. And more than this, she is in a precarious state of health, doubly, therefore, the victim of any scheme that may have for its end the management of her wealth. She possibly may die within the year; then the church would be certain to hold the entire property. This arrangement is so far matured that Earnest has already been induced to come to New York. He is now on his way. As soon as he reaches here he will be decoyed into the leashes of the priests, and no more will ever be heard of him.

Now I wish you to prevent this calamity, and to rescue Rena Leighton. If she remains in that convent much longer she is sure to die. She is too beautiful and good to die so young."

She spoke with a quick, concentrative force till she came to speak of the danger that threatened Rena, then her voice became low and unsteady.

The old doctor was very much excited. He sprang to his feet, brought his cane down with emphasis, and declared in his positive way that no further harm should befall those dear children. Mr. Malor was much calmer, though his hands shook and his voice trembled. He appeared to lift up his soul in silent prayer, that after so many years of waiting his cherished hope was to have its glad fruition.

The conversation was prolonged to a very late hour of the night. But at last the visitor arose, extended her hand to each of them, besought them not to forsake the objects of her interest, and then went into the storm that was still raging in wildness and fury.

The two men gazed at each other for a moment in silence. Then the doctor said: "Who can she be?"

Mr. Malor replied: "I have no idea, though I believe every word she has spoken."

"So do I," responded the usually incredulous doctor.

CHAPTER XXVII.

CONCLUSION.

It was one of those fair mornings towards the close of February, that holds in itself the promise of coming spring. One finds himself, almost involuntarily, listening for the early song birds, and watching for the swelling buds. Such mornings always awaken in the heart a feeling of joy, unless the heart is, indeed, very sad.

Marabel Langford was sitting by her window, watching the sunlight as it gleamed in sheets of silver on the housetops, and sparkled like a cluster of jewels on the church steeples. In her face were the visible traces of anxiety and suffering, though there was a new hope beaming from her eye and a veil of gladness was falling over her features. She was looking beyond the perplexities that had surrounded her for so many days, and the fair vision she beheld wreathed her lips in smiles, and drove the shadows away from her brow. One would have said, as he gazed on her face, that a sweet message had been borne to her since the morning star had melted away before the splendors of a new day.

A footstep beneath the window startled her, and glancing down she beheld the unwelcome visage

of Father Mallory. Her brow darkened, her lips closed firmly, and she stamped with impatience her little foot.

The priest adjusted a night key to the lock, and, entering the hall, approached the sitting-room of Marabel unannounced. Many a man has received a warmer welcome from a lady than was accorded to the worthy priest on this eventful morning. But the character of his reception had no effect whatever on his feelings. He appeared wholly absorbed in his own thoughts, and scarcely noticed at all the rebellious attitude of Marabel.

He said briefly: "I have received a letter to you from Earnest Leighton. He will reach the city on to-morrow evening's train, and will come directly here. You may be prepared to receive him. You may also expect several other visitors, who will feel in duty bound to take on themselves the entertainment of Mr. Leighton."

Marabel repeated the word "entertainment," in a tone of scorn, and a visible curl of the lip.

Mallory gave a start of surprise, as he scrutinized her features. "Thunderation!" he exclaimed. "What does this mean?"

"It means," said Marabel quietly, "if Mr. Leighton comes here I shall receive his visit through courtesy to him, and not because I am commanded by you."

"You shall respect my authority," thundered the priest.

"No more than I respect the authority of any

spaniel that may be sneaking through our streets. *Mr. Mallory*, I am no longer a Catholic." Her proud and queenly figure seemed to grow taller as she uttered these words.

"By all the minions of Beelzebub, what is the matter with you!" exclaimed the excited priest.

"I am disgusted with your wickedness," was the pointed reply.

"And after to-morrow you shall feel the sting of my hatred. You are a pretty thing! Why, I took you out of that fourth-story pig-pen, where you had been eating husks, and I have seen you clothed, fed and educated, and *this* is your return. You may bet that I will lower your ideas in a whiffet, my fine young lady."

Without a word Marabel turned from him and walked out of the room. In silent rage he watched her haughty movement till she passed from sight, then with a muttered oath he rushed from the house.

On the evening of this same day another event occurred which has a vital connection with this story. At the distance from New York of about eight hours' travel by rail there was a station where passengers on the western stages lay over to take the morning train for the metropolis. At this time Earnest Leighton arrived on one of these stages. He registered at the only hotel in the place, and early after supper retired to his room.

Owing to an accident the out train from New York was a few hours behind time. It was near 9 o'clock when it arrived. It had scarcely stopped

when a stranger sprang off, and hastily walking into the office of the hotel began to run over the names on the register. When he came to that of Earnest Leighton he took from his pocket a pencil and card and wrote in a round elegant hand:

Compliments of Louis Langford—would like to see Mr. Leighton in his room immediately.

He handed the card to the clerk, with a request that it should be delivered promptly, and walked the floor impatiently while awaiting an answer.

The waiter soon returned, and led Louis Langford to the room of Earnest Leighton. Busy were the thoughts of both during the intervening moments.

When the door was thrown open and they stood in each other's presence, their hands involuntarily met with the exclamations falling from their lips:

“Louis Langford!”

“Earnest Leighton!”

They scrutinized each other's appearance closely, as if they were ransacking memory to recall every vestige of their former selves.

“Do you remember the urchin that came to your father's house on the evening of your great bereavement?” asked Louis Langford.

“I recall vividly the instance, but would fail to connect you with that noble-hearted little fellow. But your voice—I shall never forget it—is the voice of him who aided my escape when I was a helpless prisoner. I can never repay you for that act of unselfish kindness.” The eye of Earnest beamed

with admiration for the noble man who stood in his presence.

“Do not speak of repaying me,” rejoined Louis. “There are some acts of life that lose all their beauty in the presence of a compensation. I myself have just escaped from a similar imprisonment to your own. And I am freed none too soon to save you from a worse fate than the one from which I rescued you.”

He hesitated for a moment, and then proceeded: “I have thought for a long while that, by some strange providence, the fortunes of our families were leading us more closely together. Mallory was certain I was instrumental in your escape, and from that moment till now I have rested under his suspicion, watchful and deadly. I again became involved in my efforts to help your sister—”

“My sister?” Earnest was on his feet in an instant, and his face was quivering with eager excitement. “Where is my sister?”

Louis Langford related to him the facts concerning Rena, which are already in possession of the reader. He told of her long and patient struggle against the oppression of the convent, of her dreary waiting, of her hopeless anguish, of her shattered health and wrecked constitution. It would have been difficult to tell which exhibited the deeper interest, the narrator or the listener. Tears were in the eyes of both long before he had finished.

“My first duty is to deliver my sister,” said Earnest sadly.

“To enable you to accomplish that purpose I have come to meet you. Remember you have to deal with a wary priesthood. You expect to go to my sister’s; should you do so it would be your last night of liberty. I propose taking you to the home of Mr. Malor, who is one of your most constant friends.”

A troubled look came into Earnest’s face as he asked: “What is the object of this persecution?”

“Your money,” said Louis with a smile.

“Is there no way to break the power of these men?”

“Yes: get in legal possession of your property, and you will be troubled no more. You are now of age, and can demand a settlement at once. But, in the meantime, keep out of the clutches of your enemies.”

“In order to accomplish this I must place myself under still greater obligations to you. Your service is invaluable to me.”

“Most cheerfully am I at your disposal until this business is well off hand. I am thoroughly acquainted with priestly intrigue, and I fully understand the present situation. With prudent and energetic movements we can easily defeat the plans of Mallory.”

When the sun smiled on the earth the following morning, these young men were still in earnest conversation. They had been unfolding to each other the history of their past lives. Each of them had experienced much of painful struggle, of keen

disappointment, of hope deferred. But the deep blue sky that in silent glory arched their future, appeared radiant with its star-gems, save only for a single cloud that hung, with the dark brow of death, on the far-off horizon.

By 10 o'clock they were speeding rapidly toward New York. Earnest was under the pressure of considerable excitement, but Louis was perfectly calm and undisturbed. He pointed out the beauties of the country to his companion, and entertained him with lively comments on its most attractive features.

It was barely dark when they reached the metropolis. Everything was hurry and bustle. Louis Langford quietly made selection of a carriage, motioned Earnest to enter, stepped in after him, and then gave to the driver the number of Mr. Malor's house.

As the carriage whirled away, a pair of malicious eyes gleamed after it, and with a subdued oath the man muttered: "What in the name of all the demons does this mean?"

Earnest remained silent as they hurried through the streets. His thoughts were busy in comparing the time of his departure with this moment of his return.

The carriage soon drew up before the door of Mr. Malor. When the young men entered the house they were met in the hall by the old minister and Dr. Logan. They were overjoyed to meet the son of their former friend. They gave to

him the warmest welcome, and the expression of their gratitude to Louis Lanford was most flattering.

Mr. Malor ushered them at once into the library. Earnest was in advance of the rest, and the first person he saw was Marabel. She came forward with extended hand, and they said: "Miss Langford, Mr. Leighton," and their greeting was ended. How different from what Earnest's vivid imagination had painted! How common-place these meetings are after all! One dwells on them with an unspeakable fondness, and when they come how terribly matter-of-fact they are! They are painfully void of romance. In the surprise of the moment, there was no pressure of the hand and responsive blush. Even that would have given zest and interest to the meeting.

There was one other person present in the room. He had a sharp face, keen eyes, thin lips, thin nose, high forehead and an air about him that indicated the single word, business. Of course he was a lawyer. He was introduced to Earnest as Mr. Bronte, and Louis Langford greeted him as an old acquaintance.

This little group engaged in very much conversation that is scarcely worthy of being put on record. It was interesting to most of them, because it was personal. The lawyer sat by idly tapping the table with his fingers, but never uttering a word.

Louis Langford, too, in the main, was silent, but presently he said: "In all probability a life

hangs upon our actions to-night. Would we not better to business?"

"Ay, to business," exclaimed the lawyer energetically.

Then followed a brief silence, which was broken by Mr. Bronte. "Gentlemen, I am at your service."

All eyes were turned toward Louis, and this silent appeal was strengthened by Dr. Logan remarking: "Mr. Langford, you must introduce our business."

"I will state the case briefly," said Louis, turning to the lawyer. "Robert Manning is the guardian of the children of William Leighton. These children are of age, and wish an immediate settlement."

"They shall have it in less than ten days," interpolated the lawyer.

"One of these children," continued Louis "is in a convent against her will. We wish her taken out to-morrow on a writ of *Habeas Corpus*."

"All right; nothing easier," said Mr. Bronte, making a memorandum.

"Do you wish to institute proceeding against Mallory for false imprisonment?" asked Louis of Earnest.

"No, I wish to take no steps from motives of revenge."

"Then, Mr. Bronte, we have no further business with you to-night."

The lawyer said, as he rose to leave: "I will let you know what time to-morrow we will go to

the convent. I think I can secure the writ at once." He bowed them a good night and departed.

It was near 3 o'clock on the next day when the lawyer called for Earnest, Mr. Malor and Dr. Logan to accompany him to the convent. By rapid driving they soon reached their destination, and the officer of the law, who was with them, readily gained admission to the institution.

The Superior wished to gain time by parleying, but the representative of justice declined to pass any words, but insisted that the authority of his writ should be at once recognized. At last the Superior yielded, and proposed she would bring Sister Angelica if she were able to leave her room. The officer said pointedly that he would accompany her. She objected; but her objections were in vain. They left the room together, and the remainder of the party awaited their return.

They had not long to wait. Soon the officer came, and leaning on his arm was a fair young being, clothed in white, and tottering as she walked.

Earnest sprang forward and twined his strong arms around the slender form of his long-lost sister, and tenderly kissed her pale lips. And she, poor girl, could only lock her hands around her brother's neck and weep for joy. Presently she murmured: "Hold me close, my brother; I love so dearly the pressure of your strong arms."

"They shall henceforth shield you, my little

sister," he said, as he looked down into the depths of her loving blue eyes.

"Through all the weary years, my brother, since you lost your little sister, she has met only one faithful friend. And because he would help her they cast him into prison." And a sob burst from her lips, as her head sank on her brother's shoulder.

"Do not weep little pet," he said caressingly. "Your friend has escaped and is now free."

"Oh, then," she said, "my cup of joy is full, and I ought to be so thankful."

The old doctor and minister came forward now to give Rena their greeting and blessing. But their hearts were filled with sadness as they gazed on the fragile creature who was so wasted by disease and confinement.

"But Dr. Logan said abruptly: "This excitement is too much for Rena, we must get her away from here and give her quiet."

It required but a few moments to complete the preparations. As they were leaving the room the Superior came to bid her farewell. In reality she was very much affected. She wound her arms around the girl with the greatest tenderness, as she gave her a parting kiss. When she lifted her face it was suffused with tears.

They drove away from the Convent of St. Mary with a mingled feeling of joy and sadness. Joy deep and full that Rena was found, sadness keen and painful that her life hung on so brittle a thread.

Is it ever possible, in the midst of the uncertainties of human experience, to have a single joy without an overhanging shadow?

After a slow drive they finally reached the residence of Mr. Malor, when Rena was helped to her room and left to the care of Marabel. The hearts of these two young girls met with their hands. They soon were talking with the freedom and ease of old friends. Rena spoke of the gratitude she felt to Louis Langford on account of the kindness shown her in the darkest moment of her life. Marabel gazed at the pure, uplifted face before her, and wondered if her brother would be satisfied with only the gratitude of such a heart. Then she sighed as she noticed the signal-flush of a disease that is both deceptive and deadly.

They all gathered in the parlor that evening—all save one; Louis Langford was not there. Earnest inquired for him, and Marabel explained that he was called away on business. There was one heart that felt this absence more than all others. But the evening passed joyfully and rapidly away. At its close the good old minister proposed that they should have reading and prayer. He read the beautiful Psalm, written by David after he had passed through great tribulations, then he bowed his white head and reverently thanked God for this glad re-union which had at last come in the winter of his years. Then he sent them away to their rooms with his blessing on their heads—a good man's blessing.

On the following morning Rena was stronger; and in the afternoon Louis Langford came and asked for her. She went to the parlor alone, and found him in waiting. Louis came forward to meet her, and she extended both her hands, which he took; her lips moved, but they refused to speak. After several efforts she finally said: "It was so brave and noble in you to risk your life for my sake. I have no words to tell you how grateful I am." And her beautiful blue eyes were swimming in tears.

"What you call a noble deed, others pronounce both treacherous and cowardly," he sadly said. "But let us not speak now of what I have done, or of our past lives. Come, sit down in this cozy chair, and let us talk of books, and the flowers, and the birds."

"I love them all," she said as she took the proffered chair—"the flowers—the birds—the books; but great deeds are worthy to be crowned. I shall weave you a chaplet of flowers, and the birds shall sing you a song of triumph."

"No one was ever anointed king by so fair a prophet," he replied. "The birds will listen to the call of her voice, and the flowers will freshen at her touch."

"And all because my hero is worthy," she playfully rejoined.

"The inspiration that makes heroes is drawn from the object for which they fight. With this comparison before my mind, all my acts become insignificant."

"A truce to your compliment," was replied. "But tell me why you have removed your priestly garments?"

"I am no longer a member of the priesthood," was rejoined, and a cloud swept over his face. "You know nothing of the crucial agony of a crushing doubt. The confessional was repugnant to every feeling of my nature, and in yielding it I was compelled to yield all. I am no longer a Catholic." There was a touching pathos in his tone and a silent agony in the expression of his eye that went like a sharp knife to the heart of his companion.

But she only said: "I fear I am too feeble to help you in this great struggle. I do wish I were able."

"You are able," he said with sudden impulsiveness. But he checked himself, and his strong nether lip trembled as he gained his self-control. He continued: "I must go now—you need rest and I must away to business, but I will come again to-morrow and bring you an offering of flowers." Without another word he was gone.

* * * * *

Mr. Bronte was true to his promise, and in a few weeks he forced Robert Manning to a settlement. At first Mallory was furious, but he soon became quiet when it was intimated that a case of criminal prosecution might be instituted against himself. He remained in New York four weeks after steps had been taken to restore the Leighton estate to its legitimate heirs; then, for some cause, becoming uneasy, he secretly sailed for Europe, where he has since

remained. The securities of Robert Manning suffered heavily in the final settlement. He was scarcely chargeable with dishonest transactions; he had held the estate so long that he looked upon it as the property of the church, and the losses were occasioned by careless management. The affair wounded deeply his sensitive spirit, and, in all probability, shortened his life by many years.

For many weeks Earnest was very busy getting his property well in hand. His first act was to repair and re-furnish the old homestead, on the banks of the Hudson. It was the first day of May that he installed Rena in the home of her childhood. She had suffered very much during the changeable weather of April, and was now too weak to walk. A look of quiet happiness stole into her beautiful face, as Earnest wheeled her invalid chair around the old house so full of romantic memories. She asked him to let her rest beneath the shade of the great elm, where they had played in their childhood, and where she could see the sun-lit wave of the historic river. She lay there a moment, and gazed out on the broad sheet of water, a fair, sweet image of everything that is good and holy in womanhood.

In that quiet, sacred moment, Earnest told Rena of his love for Marabel, and of her promise to become his wife as soon as his little sister should grow stronger and better. He spoke of her he loved with the proud admiration of a noble-hearted man.

Rena was delighted with the prospective happi-

ness of her brother, and was unbounded in praise of her new found sister. Earnest listened to her glowing words with a proud satisfaction. There is no joy deeper or sweeter than to hear sentiments of appreciation of those we love.

But presently her cheeks grew a little paler, as she said with a great deal of earnestness: "Brother, dear brother, you must not postpone your wedding day on account of my health. That I am delicate is the very reason you should marry earlier, for I wish so much to have Marabel with me. And then besides," she hesitated a moment, and her voice grew low and sad, "besides you know, that the coming of the leaves may be a warning to me from the angels. Brother, I suffered so much when I was alone in that convent, and I wanted to go away then—go away and be at rest. But everything is brighter now, and I should love so much to live. Death rarely comes to those who are longing for his embrace—he comes when life is full of gladness and bright possibilities are opening up before us. But still I am so happy in the happiness of my brother, I want him to bring Marabel home so very soon. I long to twine my arms around her, and kiss her as my sister."

"Rena, Rena," said Earnest, with a strain of agony in his voice, "you must not speak of dying. Love is a wonderful curative, and we all love you so much—we can not spare you, little sister."

She gave him a long, wistful look, and then replied: "Do not be alarmed at what I have said,

only promise me that your wedding day shall be as early as possible."

"I promise," said Earnest.

"Then wheel me back to the house, big brother, and if I am strong enough I will play you a single tune."

As they reached the door, they were attracted by the sound of wheels, and soon saw Louis Langford approaching. He drew near and handed a rich bouquet of fresh flowers to Rena with the remark:

"I give a floral tribute to the new mistress of Leighton Mansion."

"And she accepts it with gratitude from the gallant knight that delivered her from prison," responded Rena, with the color mantling her cheek.

The young man gazed on the frail being before him with a gathering sadness in his large dark eyes.

"Will the fresh air of your new home, Miss Rena, soon make you strong enough to take a boat-ride?" he asked.

She turned her head and looked longingly at the river, then lifting her eyes to his, said with a faint smile, "I hope so."

As if in bitter mockery of this heart-yearning, she was seized with a spasm of coughing that stained her lips with crimson. Earnest lifted her in his arms and bore her to her room, and with the help of the old nurse, administered the palliatives to allay this fearful hemorrhage. When he

returned, he found Louis Langford sitting on the chiseled lion that ornamented the steps, with his head bowed on his hand.

The attitude was suggestive of a picture of the past, and Earnest said: "Thirteen years ago, Louis, you were sitting there, trying to console two bereaved children."

"Yes, yes," he said, and his proud lips quivered with pain. "But thirteen years have brought so many changes. I do not feel the least kinship to the little boy that sat here so long ago. I have thoroughly grown out of myself. I was just pondering the question whether I am happier now than I was then."

"What is your decision?" asked Earnest.

"I scarcely know. Manhood has higher duties, and it should bring a more elevated happiness. But the tears of age are more bitter than those of childhood." They had arisen and were walking toward the gate, and there they parted with an inquiry from Louis in regard to Rena's condition.

Three weeks from that day, on the border-land between spring and summer, there was a quiet wedding at the old minister's. Only a few guests were present, and they were the near friends of Earnest and Marabel. The joy of the occasion was enhanced by the greatly improved condition of Rena. The ceremony occurred in the morning, and the infair dinner was to be had at the Leighton Mansion.

When the assembly gathered at the old house,

the delight of Mr. Malor and Dr. Logan was unbounded. They were living over again the days of their youth, and on this occasion they were the gayest of the gay. This event was the crown of their ripe years, and they could not have enjoyed with a keener relish the happiness of their own children.

Here we leave Earnest, in the midst of his friends, in possession of his beautiful bride, and in the full enjoyment of the old homestead. Marabel never looked more queenly in her life than when leaning on the arm of her husband in the happy promenades of that evening. The beauty of a great joy smiled on her lips and sparkled in her eye. Here was the realization of her most vivid dreams, and her heart beat with unbounded delight.

The echoes of the old house were awakened by the joyous laugh and the gladsome song. All save two seemed to surrender themselves fully to the merriment of the occasion. These two were Louis and Rena, and they had stolen away to the alcove at one end of the library, overlooking the river. They were quiet here and partially secluded.

Rena was sitting in a large arm-chair, and Louis occupied a stool at her feet. For many minutes they sat silently gazing out at the window at the broad expanse of water that moved so calmly before them.

Presently he turned his eyes on her with a certain fondness in his look, and said in a low tone of solicitude: "You appear so weary. I fear this day

has been too great a tax on your power of endurance.”

“I am tired and faint, but that is not the worst,” she replied, as the tear-drops gathered in her eyes and hung on their lashes. “All through this day I have carried in my heart a spirit of rebellion—rebellion against my inevitable destiny. To feel thus makes me unhappy—so very unhappy. I have wondered why I have had my health destroyed and all my prospects of life blasted by cruel treatment in the convent, which no action of mine ever merited. Nature gave me a goodly heritage in a physical constitution, and I have laid it upon the altar of what I deemed to be my duty. Why of all the young girls of this land have I been selected for this sacrifice? Bitter thoughts toward the Catholics have been in my mind to-day—far too bitter for one who is standing in the very shadow of the great hereafter. I have re-called the lonely vigils, the scant nourishment that I received, the suffering from thirst and innumerable privations, and the consuming anxiety with which I was continually harrassed—and then I have looked upon this broken and ruined frame—oh, I can not tell you of the wave of resentment that sweeps over my soul.”

She buried her face in her hands, and a low moan escaped from her lips. It was the vain regret for her ruined health; the touching, pathetic wail of the heart as it relinquishes its hold upon things earthly and fastens upon things eternal. It

was her sad Gethsemane, when the presence of the Lord was withdrawn, and before the comforting angel had appeared.

Louis Langford leaned forward and took both her hands in his own—those hot, flushed hands, and said in a pleading tone: “Do not talk that way, you are worn out now by the fatigues of the day. There has been too much excitement for your nervous condition. But remember that you are much better—strong enough to walk now. You shall suffer no more privations, and will have nothing to do but to get well. I intend getting up an excursion party to visit our mountains and northern lakes during the summer months. Earnest and Marabel shall join me and take you with them. How hale and hearty you will be when we return.”

She closed her eyes and leaned back in her chair for a moment, still clinging to his hand. Then without changing her attitude, she said: “I shall never climb the glorious mountains that God has planted on our beautiful land.”

“If you are not strong enough to climb the mountains,” said Louis, “we will sit down by one of those grand old lakes, a vast pool of Bethesda, and wait for an angel to trouble its waters, that you may bathe and be healed.”

She suddenly opened her large wistful eyes, full of tenderness now, and said, as a glow of happiness gathered in her face: “How my heart longs to cling to your hope! How fair and beautiful is

the vision of those grand mountains, lifting their royal heads on high. And those queenly lakes, lying so calm and quiet beneath the sun, or rippling in silver wavelets. When you sit at the foot of the mountains or gaze out on the lakes, I want you sometimes to think of me. I can not go with you now, I am waiting for the visit of an angel who will never trouble the waters, for he bears no healing in his wings."

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